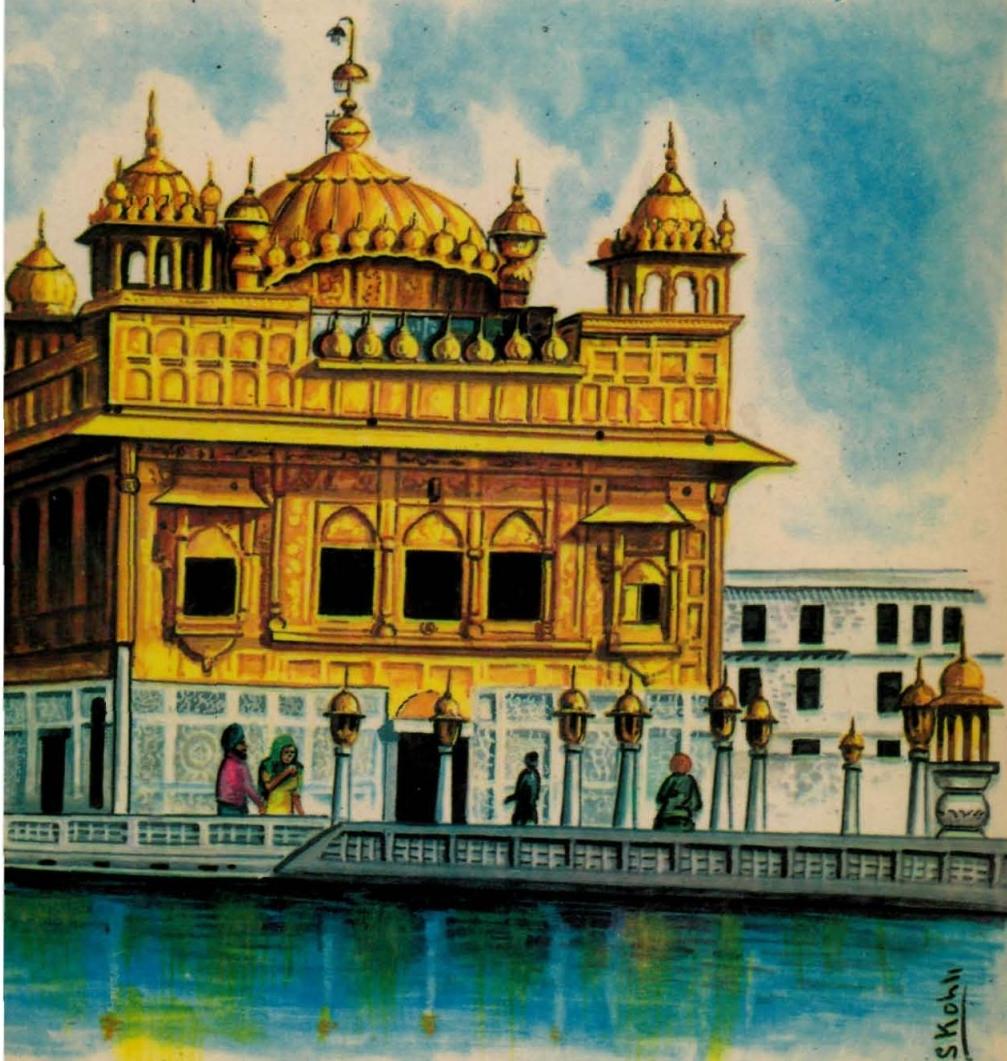
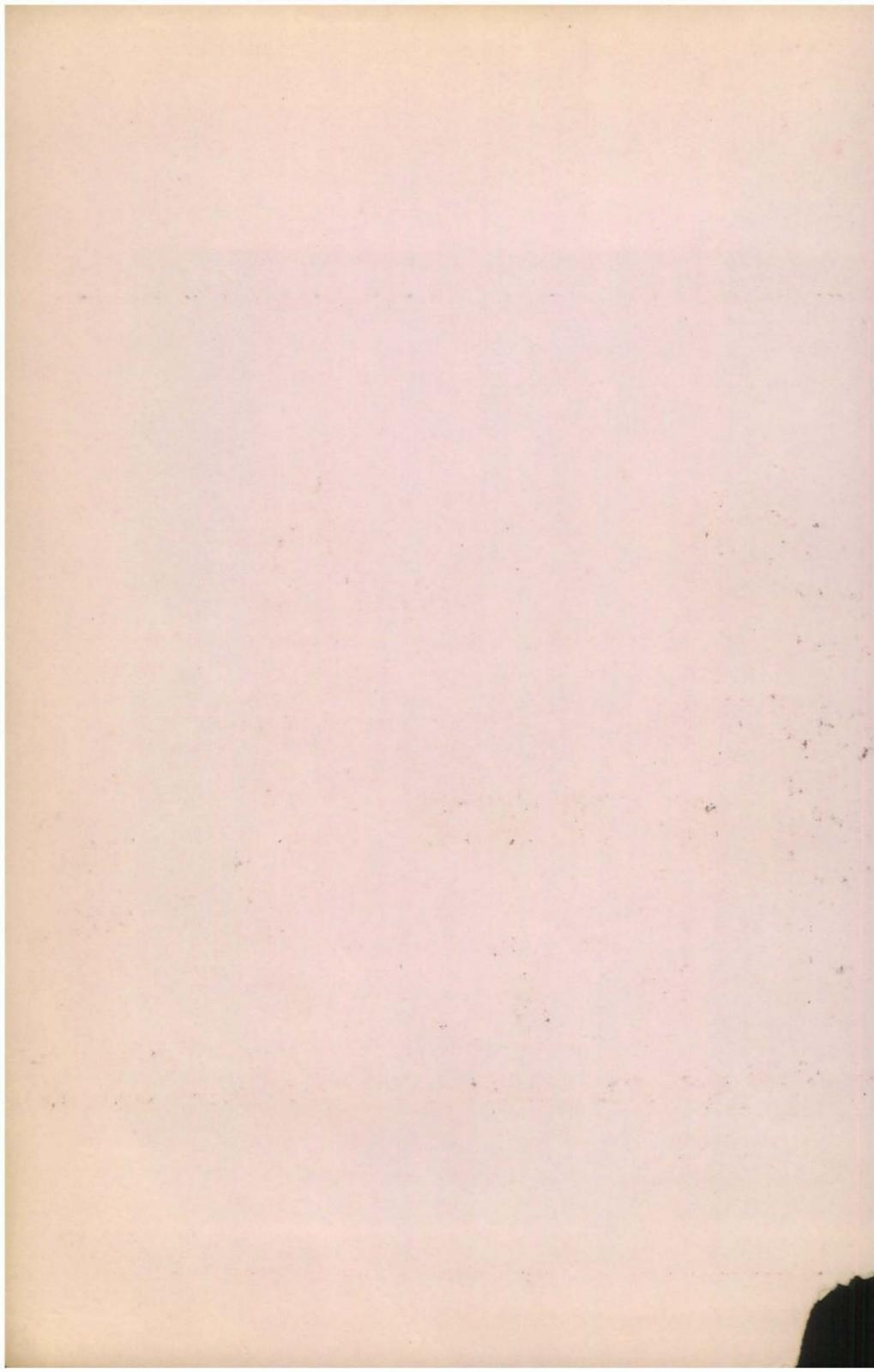


# Stories from **SIKH HISTORY**

## Book-I



**Hemkunt**



# **STORIES FROM SIKH HISTORY**

**BOOK—I**

(Guru Nanak Dev)

By

**KARTAR SINGH**

and

**GURDIAL SINGH DHILLON**

Edited by

**P. M. MACORMACK**



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- Book VI (Banda Singh Bahadur)
- Book VII (Maharaja Ranjit Singh) and thereafter till 1989)

## FOREWORD

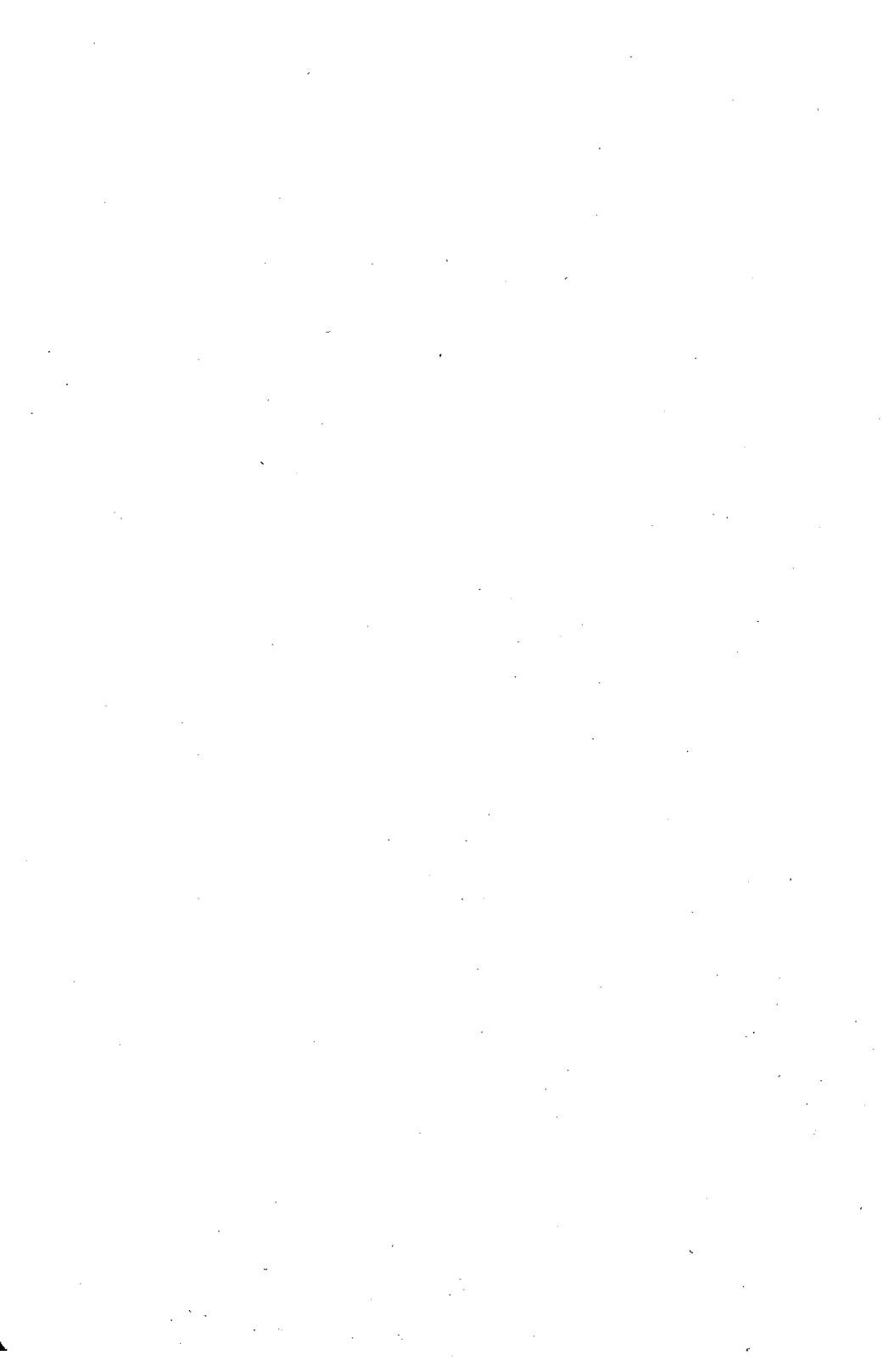
Moral and religious instruction, I am glad to find, is now being rehabilitated in our schools. Our country is secular, it is true, but there is no denying the fact that religious and moral education has a very useful function to serve.

Modern psychology has emphasized that, if the child is given proper guidance at his formative stages, it will greatly help integrate his personality. The example of the teacher and his relations with students leave a deep impression on the minds of students. Moral instruction, I feel, is better given by example than by precept.

The great figures of the past, specially the heroes of history, have shown mankind how to fight successfully against evil and face the challenges, from time to time. One of the great saviours of Indian history is Guru Nanak. Through his example, he challenged superstition, inertia, tyranny and bigotry. His life is a beacon-light which gives inspiration to all who seek guidance in the path of truth and righteous action.

The youth of today, more than any other section of society, is at the cross-roads. School students are dazed by the march of exciting events and the great tensions of the modern world. Science may throw light on the physical world, but it is only the teachings of great saints and sages which offer a glimpse into the spiritual world. Any educational system which does not take into account the moral development of the students will remain inadequate and ineffective. In this book for children, are presented a number of stories from the life of Guru Nanak in a broad and vivid manner. The pictures and sketches given therein, I am sure, will create a lasting impression on their minds. I sincerely hope that this series of Sikh History books which they have planned, will go a long way in moulding the lives of the young Indian students.

*Ganda Singh  
Ph.D., D. Litt.*



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# GURU NANAK DEV

## 1

### Talwandi

Guru Nanak Dev was the first Guru of the Sikhs. He was born over five hundred years ago. His father's name was Mehta Kalu. His mother's name was Mata Tripta. He had one sister named Nanki. She was about five years elder to him

Guru Nanak was born in a village named Talwandi. It was later called Nankana Sahib. It was given this name in memory of Guru Nanak. A beautiful Gurdwara stands at the place of his birth. It is called *Janam Asthan* or the sacred birthplace.

Nankana Sahib is now in Pakistan. No one from India can go there freely. It is very sad that we are not free to

visit and see our dear and sacred place.

The village of Talwandi was the property of a Muslim landlord. His name was Rai Bular. Baba Kalu was Bular's *patwari* or manager. He looked after his master's lands. He was honest and hardworking. Rai Bular liked and trusted him.

Rai Bular was a good and kind man. To him the non-Muslims were as dear as the Muslims. He grew very fond of Guru Nanak. He showed his love for Guru Nanak in many ways as we shall learn later in this book.

## The Child

Guru Nanak was not like other children. He did not waste his time in idle talk. He never did anything bad or naughty. He was not fond of costly clothes. He liked simple food and simple dress. He was good and kind. He spent his time in doing good to others. He loved everybody and he loved the poor most of all. He helped them whenever he could. He often gave them food, clothes and money. Above all, he gave them his love. This always made him happy.

Guru Nanak was a very active and healthy child. He was always smiling and cheerful. He liked to run about and play with other children. He had quite a number of playmates. All of them were fond of him. They looked



Giving sweets to playmates

upon him as their leader. He, too, was very fond of his playmates. Sometimes he used to take them to his house. There he would ask his mother to give them sweets. Mata Tripta was a kind lady. She readily brought out sweets for her dear son's playmates. He himself gave the sweets to his friends. He took pleasure in serving others in this way.

He often played games with his

friends. But he did not play such games as hockey, cricket, football or tennis. Such games were not known in those days. He used to play games like *kabaddi* (tip-cat) and hide and seek. He also ran races with his playmates. None could beat him at these games.

He was the best player. He ran faster than all his playmates and he was the fastest runner.

Sometimes, he played a strange new game. It showed his love for God. For that game he chose a green and grassy place near a pond. The pond was quite near his home.

He took his seat at the chosen grassy place. He made his comrades sit before him in a half circle. Then he said to them, 'Brothers, let us play a new, good, and useful game. Let us sing the name of God. I shall lead you with my song. You will all sing after



Praying with his friends  
me as I do. Do you agree, my brothers ?  
'Yes, yes,' they said in one voice.

Then he began singing, '*Dhann Nirankar Sat Kartar!*' This means God's formless & He is Truth. All his comrades sang after him as he did.

His voice was clear and sweet. Soon, he began to sing louder and louder. His comrades also raised their voices louder and louder.

This song was heard by all who

passed that way. Many people would stop to listen. Some of them would go near the singing party. Sometimes they would also start singing with the children.

Rai Bular had often watched this game with pleasure. He began to love Guru Nanak. Later, he built a room there in memory of Guru Nanak's sacred game. He also changed the pond into a tank.

Long afterwards, a beautiful gurdwara was built at that place. The gurdwara is called *Bal Lila*.

## 3

## At School

Mehta Kalu decided to send his only son to school. Guru Nanak was then about six years old. He was taken to the village school. In that school he was to learn reading, writing, and arithmetic.

Guru Nanak was very happy. He was keen to learn. He was a very able and clever child. He proved to be a quick learner. In a short time he learnt all that the teacher could teach him. The teacher was filled with wonder. No child had ever been so quick to learn so much and so well.

One day Guru Nanak said to his teacher, 'Every man has to die. No one can live forever. After death every man has to give an account of his life. He is punished for his evil actions. He

is rewarded for his good deeds. What you teach can be of no use at that time. You should teach your pupils to give a good account of their lives. You should teach them to be good and truthful. You should teach them to do good to others. You should teach them to keep away from bad people. You should teach them to do no evil. You should teach them to love and remember God. Only in this way will they become



Guru Nanak with his teacher

truly learned. Only in this way can you become a truly good teacher.

The teacher was filled with wonder all the more. 'Dear Nanak', he said, 'You have taught me a good and useful lesson. You are my teacher. I am your pupil. I have learnt much from you. I shall always remember your words. I shall always follow your advice.'

The child-Guru then gave up going to the village school.

For some time Guru Nanak was free to do what he pleased. He ran about and played with his comrades. Sometimes he wandered about in the forest near the village. Sometimes he sat under a shady tree for hours. Sitting there, he used to think of God.

After some time his father decided to put him under a Muslim teacher. He was to learn Persian from that teacher. Guru Nanak gladly agreed to that.

Here, again, he proved to be a quick learner. In a short time he learnt as much as the teacher could teach him. He then gave up going to that school. But before doing so, he taught his Muslim teacher to love and remember God. He taught him to be good, honest, and truthful. He taught him to love and serve all men. He taught him to teach his pupils in the right way. He said to him, 'Always remember one thing : God is the father of us all. We are all His children. We should all love one another. We should all live together like a good family.'

The Muslim teacher bowed before his pupil. He said, 'Dear Nanak, you have taught me a good and useful lesson. You are my teacher. I am your pupil. I shall ever remember your words. I shall ever follow your advice.'

## The Cattle-Grazer

For some time again Guru Nanak was free to do what he pleased. But his father did not like this. He said to his wife, 'Our only son is wasting his time. He does not do anything useful. He must make better use of his time. He must be made to do something good and useful. Let us make him graze the cattle.'

Mata Tripta replied, 'That is a good idea. Let us make him a cattle-grazer. He loves to walk in the forest. As a cattle-grazer, he can spend his day in the forest. He will be doing something useful at the same time.'

Mehta Kalu told his son what he wanted him to do. Guru Nanak readily agreed to obey his father. He became a cattle-grazer. Every morning he took

his father's cattle into the forest. He looked after them with great care. He took them to places where there was plenty of good green grass. They ate their fill of the green grass. All the time Guru Nanak kept his mind fixed on God.

At noon he took the cattle to a grove of shady trees. The cattle rested there during the hot after-noon. Guru Nanak sat near them in silence. He kept thinking of God. Sometimes he lay down on the soft, green grass and went to sleep.

One day he sat under a tree to watch the grazing cattle. He began to think of God. He soon forgot all about the cattle. His mind was totally occupied with thoughts of God. The cattle went on grazing as they liked. They went into a farmer's field. There was a good green crop in that field. They liked it very much. They had a hearty meal.



Cattle grazing in a farmer's field while Nanak slept

The farmer saw the cattle destroying his crop. He got angry. He went running to that place. He drove the cattle out of his field. He drove them to the shady tree under which Guru Nanak sat thinking of God. He shook him by the shoulder. He spoke very angrily to him. Guru Nanak kept quiet and cool.

The farmer then went to Rai Bular. He said to him, 'Sir, Mehta Kalu's

cattle have eaten up my good green crop. His son allowed them to enter my field. He slept while the cattle ate my crop. I have suffered a heavy loss. I am a poor man. Kindly order my loss to be made good. Order Mehta Kalu to pay for my loss.'

Rai Bular sent for Mehta Kalu. He also sent for Guru Nanak. He told them the farmer's story. He told Mehta Kalu to pay for the farmer's loss.

Mehta Kalu was very sad to hear this. He was angry with his son. He spoke harsh words to him. Guru Nanak kept cool and quiet. Then Guru Nanak said to Rai Bular, 'Please send some body to see the field. Let him see what damage has been done by my cattle. Then tell us how much to pay.'

Rai Bular sent one of his men to the field. The farmer went with him. The two soon reached the field. The crop



'Please send somebody to see the field.'

was perfectly all right. None of it had been eaten up. The farmer was filled with wonder.

The two went back to Rai Bular. The man said to him. ‘Sir, the farmer has told a lie. His crop is all right. No damage has been done.’

The farmer said, ‘Great Sir, I did not tell a lie. I spoke the truth. The cattle did eat up my crop. But now it is all right. Nay, it is even greener and better than before. I don’t know how it has happened.’

Rai Bular said, ‘Our Nanak loves God. He always keeps thinking of Him. God loves him. God has shown His love for Nanak. He has made the crop green and whole again. I bow my head before him. He is a great one. Mehta Kalu, be kind to him at all times. If he causes you any loss, I shall make it good to you.’

A gurdwara was later built on the field. It is called *Kiara Sahib* or the Sacred Field.

## A Cobra Serves

For some years Guru Nanak went on working as a cattle-grazer. Every morning he drove his father's cattle into the forest to graze. At noon he used to drive them to a shady place. The cattle lay and rested under the shady trees. He sat on the grassy ground thinking of God. After a time, he laid himself on the soft, grassy ground and went to sleep.

One summer day a strange thing came to pass. He was asleep under a shady tree. The cattle were resting near him. After some time, the rays of the hot summer sun began to fall on his face. Soon, a large snake came out of its hole nearby. It was a cobra. A cobra is a very poisonous snake. Its bite kills a man at once. This cobra

was very big and black. It spread its hood. The hood was large and wide. How wide ? It was more than thirty centimetres wide. It was a sort of small umbrella. The cobra placed its hood between the sun and Guru Nanak's face. The sun's rays fell on the cobra's hood. They no longer fell on Guru Nanak's face. He did not feel the heat. He remained sound asleep.

By chance, Rai Bular came that way. He was on horseback. He saw Guru Nanak lying on the grassy ground. Near him he saw a big black cobra



Rai Bular thought.....

with its large, wide hood. He was filled with fear. He thought, "Perhaps the cobra has bitten and killed dear Nanak." He went up quickly to the place. The cobra saw him coming. It folded its hood. It quickly ran away.

On going near, Rai Bular found that Guru Nanak was fast asleep. The sun's rays were falling upon his face. He was alive. The big, black cobra had not bitten him. It had placed its large, wide hood between the hot summer sun and the Guru's face. It had thus shaded his face from the sun. It had



The cobra had bitten him.

done him no harm. It had done a service to him.

Rai Bular was filled with joy and wonder. He said to himself, 'Nanak is very dear to God. Therefore, He made the cobra shade his face from the hot sun. How wonderful !'

He got down from his horse. He woke up the sleeping lad. He bowed his head before him. He touched his feet. He took him up in his arms and kissed his forehead. From that day he began to hold Guru Nanak in great respect.

## The Good Bargain

Guru Nanak worked as a cattle-grazer for some time. Then he gave up that work. He was again free to do what he liked and to go where he pleased. He walked about in the forest for a good part of the day. Sometimes, he met there *sadhus* and *fakirs*. (holymen). He held talks with them. His talks were about God.

Mehta Kalu did not like this at all. He thought that his son was wasting his time. He wanted him to do some useful work. He wanted him to earn money.

So, one day he said to him, 'Nanak, you are now a lad of fifteen. Soon you will have to marry. You will have a family. You will need money to support that family. But you do nothing to earn

money. You should begin to earn. I shall tell you what to do. I shall give you some money. You must go to another town and use the money to make a good bargain. Next time, I shall give you a much bigger sum. Don't lose it. Spend it in making some good bargains. Do you like the idea ? Will you obey me ?'

Guru Nanak replied, 'Dear father, I like the idea. I shall obey you. I shall make a good bargain with the money.' Mehta Kalu gave him a sum of twenty rupees. It was not at all a small sum. Twenty silver rupees of those days would be equal to more than a thousand rupees of today. So Guru Nanak was given quite a large sum.

Guru Nanak got ready to start. A servant, named Bhai Bala, was to go with him. The two set out towards a town nearby. Its name was Chuharkana. In three or four hours they reached the



Guru Nanak serving the sadhus.

town. They noticed a group of sadhus sitting in a grove of shady trees. Guru Nanak was fond of sadhus. He liked to meet and talk with one of the sadhus in the grove. He learnt that they were hungry. For four long days they had eaten no food at all.

Guru Nanak had a kind heart. He felt pity for them. He said to himself, 'To feed these hungry men of God will be a very good bargain.' So he decided to feed them. Bala advised him not to do so. He said, 'Your father will not like this. He did not give you the money for this purpose. He will be angry with you, if you spend his money in this way.'

'But,' said Guru Nanak, 'he told me to make a good bargain with the money. I shall spend it in feeding these hungry holy men. That will be a good bargain. God will be pleased with it. My father,

too, will like it very much. I feel sure of that.'

So, he and Bala went to Chuharkana nearby. There he bought flour, pulses, salt, ghee and other articles of food. He spent the whole sum of twenty rupees in that way.

Those articles of food had to be taken to the shady grove. Guru Nanak hired a cart for that purpose. The articles of food were loaded in that hired cart. They were taken to the grove of shady trees. There they were handed over to the hungry holy men. They were sufficient to feed them for many days.

The holy men made a hearty meal. They broke their four days' fast. 'God bless you, dear child,' said they. 'You have been kind to us. May God be kind to you ! May He make you happy and great.'

He then started homewards. Bala was with him. By sunset they had almost reached Talwandi. Guru Nanak thought of his father. He said to himself, 'Father loves money. He might not like my good bargain. He might be angry with me. I should keep away from him for some time.'

Near the village there was a big, tall, shady tree. Its branches touched the ground on all sides. It thus formed a sort of tent. Guru Nanak decided to pass the night under that tent. That tree is still there. It is called *Tambu Sahib* or the Sacred Tent. There is a Gurdwara at the place. It is called *Tambu Sahib*.

Guru Nanak told Bala to go home. The following morning, Baba Kalu heard of Bala's return. He sent for him. Bala told him the whole story. Baba Kalu became very angry. He went out in haste. He soon reached the



Nanki placed herself between Guru Nanak  
and her father

tree under which his son was hiding. He dragged him out from under the tree. He began to slap him, right and left. 'You have wasted my money,' he said, again and again, in great anger.

Guru Nanak's cheeks became red because of the hard slaps. He bore the beating bravely and calmly. Soon his sister, Nanki, came running to the place. She placed herself between her

father and her brother. Thus she made her father stop beating her brother.

But the beating did not make Guru Nanak angry or sad. He was quite happy in spite of the beating. He had done a good deed. He had fed the hungry. He had helped the poor. He had done this in the name of God. What if he was beaten for it ? He was happy at the good bargain which he had made.

We should always remember the good bargain made by Guru Nanak. We, too, should try to do good to others. We should all help those who need our help. We should be kind to the poor. We should feed the hungry. We should clothe the naked. We should look after those who are ill. This good work may cause some trouble to us, but we should not lose heart. We should not be sad over it. We should think of Guru Nanak and his good bargain.

## Three Golden Rules

Mehta Kalu wanted his son to do some useful work. So it was decided to send him to Sultanpur Lodhi. His sister Nanki's husband, Diwan Jai Ram, was a servant of Nawab Daulat Khan, governor of Sultanpur. Jai Ram was able to find a job for Guru Nanak. He was appointed the Nawab's *modi* or storekeeper. He was put incharge of the Nawab's *modikhana* or store-house.

Now you may ask, 'What was a *modikhana*? What was a *modi*'s duty or work ?'

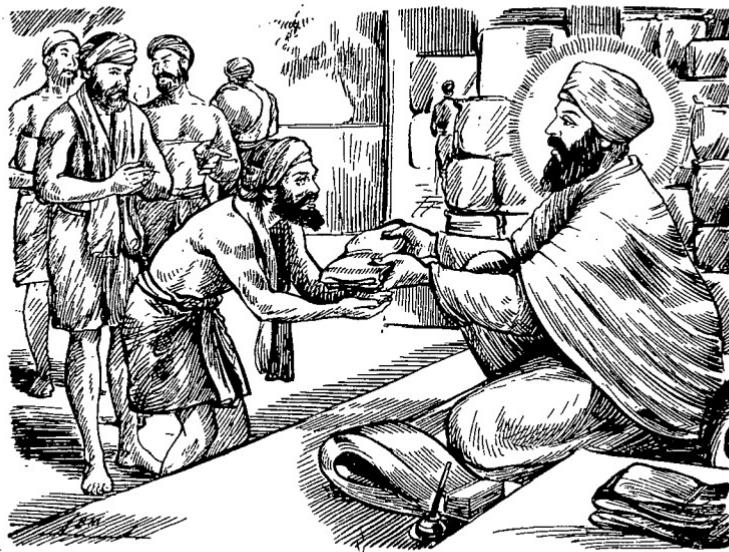
Owners of land had to pay land-tax to the government. In these days, this tax is paid in cash. But, in those days, the land-owners gave a part of their crops as the land-tax. They gave all

types of grain, cotton, chillies and *gur* or brown sugar. All these things were stored in a place called a *modikhana*.

Some of these things were given for use in the Nawab's house. Some of them were given to his army, police, and servants. The rest of them were sold to the public.

The *modi* had to keep an account of these things. He had to weigh them as they came in. He had to weigh them when they were given out. He had to keep an account also of the money made by selling those things. The money had to be deposited in the Nawab's treasury. For this work, he was given some pay and some rations.

Guru Nanak did this work very well. He was fair and gentle to everybody. All who came to the *modikhana* went away satisfied and pleased. He was specially sweet and



Guru Nanak serving the poor.

kind to the poor. To them he gave away a part of his own rations.

The Nawab's servants and the common people began to love and honour him. He became very popular with them all. But some bad people did not like this. Some of them went to the Nawab and said, 'Your *modi* is dishonest and careless. Your *modikhana* will soon become empty. He will then run away.'

The Nawab had Guru Nanak's accounts checked a number of times. Once, the Guru was shut in a room during the checking. But everything was found to be all right. Rather, some balance was found in his favour. The Nawab was satisfied. The evil persons were put to shame.

While doing his duties so well, Guru Nanak kept his mind fixed on God. He repeated God's Name at all times. He made others do the same. Every morning, he got up about three hours before sunrise. He went to the Bein river and after bathing in the river, he sat near the bank. He fixed his mind on God and sang songs in His praise until it was day.

At Sultanpur, Guru Nanak showed to all how a man of religion should live and act. He wanted the people to live and act like him. He used to tell them, 'A man of religion should do three

things. One, he should earn his living with honest labour. He should not lead an idle life. Secondly, he should share his earnings with others. He should help the weak. He should give food to the hungry. He should give clothes to the naked poor. Thirdly, he should always remember God. He should ask others to do likewise. Such are the three main golden rules of my religion. live and act according to them. You will become truly religious. You will be happy, really happy.”

## All Men Are Brothers

Guru Nanak worked as Nawab Daulat Khan's *modi* for about twelve years. Then he decided to give up the Nawab's service. The Nawab had become very fond of him. He urged him to stay on in his service. But the Guru shook his head and said, 'No, friend, I cannot serve you any longer. I have now to serve God and His children. I must go.'

So Guru Nanak gave up the Nawab's service. Under the Nawab's orders, the Guru's accounts were cleared. He was given what was found due to him. He gave away to the poor all that he had. Then he put on the dress of an *udasi*. He took leave of his family. He bade farewell to his friends. He went out of the town. Sitting under a tree, he

thought of God. He made plans for his work.

He remained silent for one day. Then he broke his silence on the next day. He began to say, "There is no Hindu and no Musalman."

These words of the Guru were soon on everybody's lips. They also reached the ears of the Nawab's Qazi. He was red with anger. He went to the Nawab. He complained to him about Guru Nanak. The Nawab sent for the Guru.

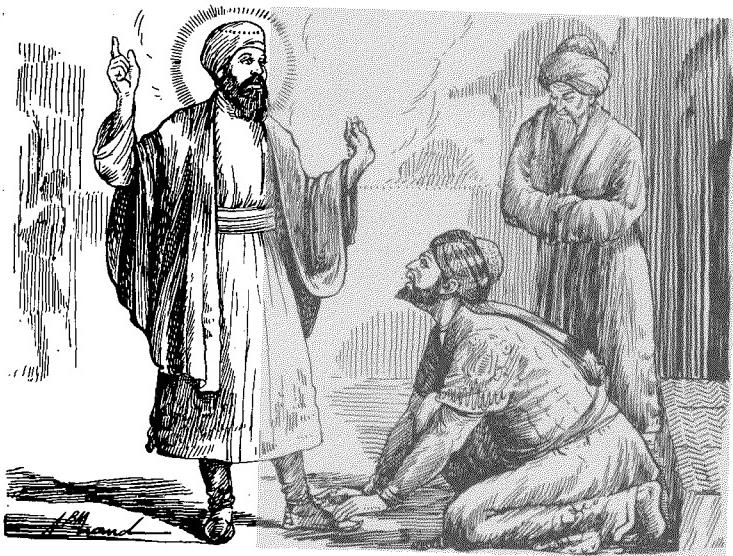
Guru Nanak went to the Nawab's court. The Nawab seated him by his side. He said to the Qazi, 'Put to him any questions that you like.'

The Qazi said to the Guru, "Why do you say, 'There is no Hindu and no Muslim ?' About the Hindus I shall not say anything. But there are hundreds of Muslims in this very town. There are thousands of them in the country.

What you say is not true."

Guru Nanak replied, "It is true that there are thousands who call themselves Muslims. There are thousands who call themselves Hindus. All the same, there is no Hindu. There is no Muslim. The Hindus have forgotten the rules of their religion. The Muslims have forgotton the rules of their religion. All Hindus and Muslims are sons of the same Father. They are brothers. They should live together like brothers. But they are not doing so. A true Hindu and a true Muslim should do nothing that may displease God. He should do such acts as may please God. Some such acts are: to be kind and merciful to all His children; to do no harm to any one; to be just, humble, and truthful; to avoid anger, greed, and pride; not to take what belongs to another by right; ever to think of God; to earn a living by honest labour; to share one's earnings

with the poor and the needy; to try to make others live and act in this way. Now, look around, and tell me how many people do all this. How many people can be called true Hindus or Muslims ?”



The Nawab fell at Guru's feet

The Qazi could say nothing in reply. The Nawab fell at the Guru's feet and said, “You are right. God has spoken through your mouth. You have taught

us a good lesson. We thank you for it.  
We shall try to become true Muslims."

All present in the Nawab's court  
bent their heads before the Guru.  
Even the Qazi had to do so.

## The True Prayer

After having satisfied the Nawab and his Qazi, the Guru got ready to leave. By then it was time for the afternoon *Namaz* or the Muslim prayer. The Nawab said to the Guru, ‘You have said that Hindus and Muslims, all, are sons of the same Father. We are going to the mosque for *Namaz*. Will you join us in our prayers to that common Father of us all ?’

The Guru agreed readily. All went to the mosque. The Qazi stood up and began the *Namaz*. All present joined him. Only Guru Nanak remained sitting and watching. The prayer was over after a time. The Nawab said to him, “You had promised to join us in our *Namaz*. But you have not done so. Why not ?”

The Guru said, ‘Yes, I did promise to join you in your prayer. But you were not saying the prayer. You were not even present at the *Namaz*. How could I join you, Nawab Sahib ?’

The Nawab said, ‘No, I was here, before your eyes. I was busy saying the prayer.’ ‘No,’ said the Guru. ‘You were not here. Your body was here, no doubt. But you yourself were in Kabul. You were busy buying horses there. That was no *Namaz*. It was a mere show, a false show.’

The Nawab bowed his head. He said, ‘You are right. I was not here at the prayers. But our Qazi is a deeply religious man. He must have said the prayers in the right way. You could have joined him.’

The Guru replied, ‘The Qazi too, was not here. His body was here, of course. He has a new-born colt at home. Before coming here, he forgot to



The Qazi was thinking of his new-born colt

tie it properly. There is a well in the compound of his house. He feared that the new-born colt might fall into the well. All the time he was busy, in thinking of the colt.'

The Qazi also bowed his head and said, 'You are right, O man of God. You have taught us a good lesson.'

Guru Nanak said, 'Always remember this lesson. When we say our prayers, our minds and hearts must be really

**busy in the prayers. We should not let them run about after other things. Only such prayer is useful. God hears it.'**

## 10

### Bhai Lalo

Guru Nanak now started on his travels or tours. Bhai Mardana was with him. The latter was a low-caste Muslim. He was a very good singer. Leaving Sultanpur, they travelled to the west. They went from village to village. In every place, the Guru taught people how to live and act as truly religious men. He explained to them his three golden rules of religion. In due course, they reached Eminabad. This town lies in the district of Gujranwala in Pakistan.

There were many rich people in the town. But he did not go to the house of any of the rich men. Instead, he went to the house of a poor man named Bhai Lalo. The latter was a carpenter. In those days, carpenters were looked

upon as Hindus of a low caste. They were called *Shudras*. The high-caste Hindus—*Brahmins* and *Khatri*s—kept away from them. They did not accept food or drink from a low-caste man like Bhai Lalo.

Guru Nanak was a *Khatri* by caste. He was thus a high-caste man. But he had no pride of caste. He did not think and act like other high-caste people. He loved people of all castes. To him all men were dear as brothers.

Bhai Lalo was a poor, low-caste man. But he was good and kind-hearted. He took pleasure in helping and serving others. He did this because he loved God. Lovers of God are always kind to all. He never sat idle. He was always busy in doing some useful work. He worked for his daily bread. He shared his earnings with others.

Guru Nanak was very fond of good men like Bhai Lalo. That was the reason why he went to that poor carpenter's house. He knocked at his door. Bhai Lalo looked up. He saw the Guru and his companion. He rose to welcome them. He took them into the humble cottage which was his home. He seated the Guru on a little cot or *charpai*, covered with a clean sheet. That was the only cot in his cottage. He seated Mardana on a straw mat.



Bhai Lalo's guests

He gave them fresh, cool water to drink. Then he began to cook food for his holy guests. He had no wife. Hence he had to do the cooking himself.

Soon, the food was ready. It consisted of coarse dry bread and *sag* (spinach). He placed it before the guests. At the sight of the coarse bread, Mardana felt uneasy. He said to himself. 'I fear this coarse dry bread will be too hard for my teeth. I shall not be able to chew and swallow it. My stomach will not like it either.'

He looked at the Guru. He saw that he was eating and enjoying the food. Bhai Mardana put a morsel to his own mouth. To his wonder, the food was soft, nice, and sweet. It tasted better than any sort of food he had ever taken before. He ate his fill.

Guru Nanak stayed with Bhai Lalo for some days. During the day he used

to go out to a shady place outside the town. There he used to pray and think of God. Bhai Mardana used to sing sacred songs or *shabads* made by the Guru. He was a very good singer. He had a very sweet voice. He knew a large number of *shabads* by heart.

Soon, people began to gather around the Guru. They liked to hear his sacred songs. He taught them the three golden rules of his religion. He taught them to remember God and to be good, honest and truthful men. He became very popular. More and more people gathered around him, day by day. Many Hindus and Muslims accepted him as their religious teacher or Guru. They became his Sikhs. Of course, Bhai Lalo was the first among them.

Bhai Lalo learnt by heart many of the Guru's sacred songs. He understood the Guru's teachings better than

all others. They accepted him as their leader.

After the Guru's departure, Bhai Lalo's house became, for them, a *dharamshala*. Every morning and evening, they gathered there. They sang the Guru's sacred songs. They said prayers together. Everyone of them tried his best to follow Guru Nanak's three golden rules of life. This gave them peace and happiness.

## Malik Bhago

In a short time, the Guru's stay at Bhai Lalo's house became the talk of the whole town. *Brahmins* and *Khatris* did not like the Guru's act. They said, 'This holyman (*sadhu*) is a *Khatri* by caste. He has a low-caste Muslim as his companion. He lives and dines with a low-caste Hindu. He is doing something which no Hindu should do. He has taken the wrong path.'

Some of them went to the Guru. They advised him to give up living with the low-caste carpenter. They said, 'You are doing what no high-caste Hindu should do.'

The Guru replied, 'I am not a Hindu. I am not a Muslim. I have a religion of my own. I have no caste. In my view all men are equal. A man who



They said, "You are doing what no high-Caste Hindu should do."

does good, noble deeds is a high-caste man. One who does low, evil deeds is a low-caste man. In my view, therefore, Bhai Lalo is a high-caste man.'

They had no reply to make. They went away.

Eminabad, then, belonged to a Muslim sardar or chief, named Zalim Khan. Malik Bhago was his manager. This man was greedy, proud and cruel. One day, he gave a feast to Brahmins and *sadhus* (holymen). He invited Guru Nanak, too. But the Guru did not accept the invitation. This made the Malik very angry. He sent his servants to bring the Guru.

Malik Bhago's men went to the Guru. They asked him to go with them. He agreed. He wanted to teach a lesson to Malik Bhago. So, he went with them to their master's house. Many people went with him. They wanted to see what would happen.

The Guru reached Malik Bhago's house. The Malik looked angrily at him, and said, 'You are a *Khatri*. You live and dine with a *Shudra*. You refused to come to my house and dine. Why ?'

The Guru replied, 'I eat what I like. I refuse to eat what I do not like. I like the food given by Bhai Lalo. I do not like the food given by you.'

'But why ?' said Malik Bhago, angrily.

The Guru replied, 'I shall tell you. Let some food be brought from your kitchen.'

The Malik's men brought a dish of rich food. The Guru had with him a piece of Bhai Lalo's bread. He held that piece of bread in his right hand. He held a piece of Malik Bhago's bread in his left hand. Lifting his arms, he pressed the two pieces. Drops of

milk came out from Bhai Lalo's bread.  
Drops of blood came from Malik  
Bhago's bread.



Drops of blood came out from Malik Bhago's bread

The Guru said, 'You have seen the difference between Bhai Lalo's food and yours. Bhai Lalo is a good, God-fearing man. He earns his bread with honest labour. He shares his earnings with others. Such a person's food is pure. It is sweet like milk and honey. But you are a different kind of man.'

Others work for you. You take away most of what they earn. You do not let them have enough to eat. They are ill-fed and hungry. What you eat is full of their blood. You are proud, cruel, and greedy. You never think of God. How could I agree to eat your food full of poor people's blood ?"

The Guru's words went deep into Malik Bhago's heart. He fell at the Guru's feet, and said, 'Tell me, O holy man, how I may get pardon for my sins.'

The Guru replied, 'Give all your wealth to the poor. Do honest work to earn your living. Be good and kind to all. Give up your pride. Be humble. Always remember God. Love all men as your brothers. Help everyone who needs your help. Serve all who need your service. That is the way to win God's forgiveness and love.'

**Malik Bhago again fell at the Guru's feet. He promised to live and act as advised by the Guru.**

## 12

### Sajjan, The Robber

Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana continued their travels. They travelled by short stages. In every place the Guru explained to the people the three golden rules of his religion. He taught them the lessons of truth, love, labour, service and worship of God.

Once, during these travels, the Guru and his companion arrived at a place called Tulamba. That place is now in the district of Multan in Pakistan. A well-known man lived there. His name was Sajjan. He dressed himself like a pious man. But he was a very cruel at heart. Looking at him, nobody could imagine that he was a cruel robber.

He had built for himself a large house at some distance from the village. It was by the side of a road. At one

corner of the house, he had built a mosque. At the other end of his house, he had built a Hindu temple. He had also built a *serai* or a rest-house. Travellers were given food and lodging there free of cost.

All travellers were welcomed at the rest-house. Sajjan's men gave them good food to eat. They gave the travellers soft, clean beds to sleep in. After the travellers had fallen asleep they were killed. Their bodies were thrown into a well. All their goods were taken by Sajjan. A very large number of travellers had been killed and looted in that way. Sajjan had become very rich.

Guru Nanak had heard much about Sajjan. He had decided to change him into a good man. It was for that purpose he had come to Sajjan's house.

Sajjan and his men welcomed the Guru and his companion. Sajjan came to the Guru and began to talk. The

Guru asked him his name. Sajjan replied, 'My name is Sajjan. The Hindus call me Sajjan Mal. The Muslims call me Sajjan Shah. But I am neither a Hindu, nor a Muslim. I am a *sajjan* or friend and servant of all.'



Sajjan with Guru Nanak

The Guru said, 'But do you really act like a *sajjan* or friend ?'

Sajjan said, 'Yes, holy Sir, I welcome and serve all who come here.

In my *serai* all guests are given food and lodging free. I have built a mosque for my Muslim guests, and a temple for my Hindu guests. Every visitor is served with care and kindness. Don't I act like *sajjan* or friend ?'

The Guru said, 'But what happens to them afterwards ? Are they not killed and looted ? You may deceive people; but you cannot deceive God. He watches and knows all your deeds. You are gathering wealth by killing and robbing people. When you die, this wealth will remain here. The sins which you do for it, will go with you. You will be punished for them. Take heed, my *sajjan*. It is never too late to mend. There is still time for you to become a good man. There is still time for you to wash away your sins. There is time, still, to win God's forgiveness and love. Will you try, dear Sajjan ?'

**Sajjan began to weep. He fell at the**

Guru's feet and said, 'I will obey you. I will do all that you tell me to do. Tell me how I may earn God's forgiveness and love.'

The Guru replied, 'Confess all your evil deeds. Be sorry for them from the bottom of your heart. Pray to God for His forgiveness and love. Give away all your wealth to the poor. Begin to live and act like a good and honest man. Help all who need your help. God will forgive you. I shall pray for you.'

The Guru then explained to him the three golden rules of his religion. Sajjan listened with attention and deep respect.

Sajjan again fell at the Guru's feet. He promised to live and act as advised by the Guru. He gave away his wealth to the poor. He changed his house into a *dharamshala* (A religious Commune). He began to preach the Sikh religion. He was the first Sikh preacher.

## 13

### At Hardwar

Once, during his travels, Guru Nanak reached Hardwar. A religious fair was being held there at that time. Thousands of Hindus had gathered there. The Guru saw a large number of people bathing in the sacred river. Standing in the river, they were throwing water to the east. They believed that the water would reach their dead forefathers.

The Guru did not believe in such things. He believed that what they did was wrong. He decided to make them see this. So, he stepped into the Ganga. He began to throw water to the west. He did it with both his hands. This act was very strange. Nobody had ever done such a thing before.

People began to gather around him.

They all laughed and shouted at him.  
He paid no heed to them. He went on



They all laughed at him

throwing water to the west. One of  
them held him by the arm, and said.

‘Why are you throwing water to the west?’

The Guru said, ‘Why do you throw water to the east?’

‘Don’t you know that?’ shouted many of them at once. ‘We throw water to our dead forefathers. It will reach them. They need it very much.’

The Guru said, ‘Where do your forefathers live? How far off is the place from here?’

They replied, ‘They are millions of kilometeres away. The water thrown towards the rising sun will reach them.’

‘That is good news,’ said the Guru. ‘Let me complete my work. Let me water my crops. They must be drying for want of water.’

Saying this, he began to throw water to the west more eagerly and more

quickly. The people began to laugh and shout still more loudly. They said, 'Where are your crops ? Where are your fields ?'

The Guru replied, 'They are in the Punjab. They need water while I am away. I felt sad to think that they might dry and die. But then I saw you throwing water to the east with one hand. I was told that it would reach your forefathers, living millions of kilometers, away. This gave me an idea. Let me water my fields, I thought. I began to throw water in their direction. I used both hands. Two hands can throw more water than one. It will reach them. They will become green. You have shown me a very good way of watering my fields. Thank you ! Let me complete my work, please.'

He was about to begin again. But they all shouted, 'How simple you

are ! The water thrown by you falls back into the river. Don't you see that ? How can it reach your fields ?

The Guru replied, 'How wise you are ! Your forefathers are millions of kilometers away. They are not even on this earth. The water thrown by you also falls back into the river. Yet you say that it will reach your forefathers. My fields are on this very earth, in this very country. They are only a few hundred kilometres away. Why should not the water thrown by me reach those fields ? If your water can reach your forefathers, my water can surely reach my fields.'

The people had nothing more to say. They felt that the Guru was right. They admitted their error. They begged him to give them more good advice. He explained to them the three golden rules of his religion. He told them how to live and act as good, honest, truthful

and God-fearing men. Then he said, 'What you give to the poor, out of your honest earnings, will go with you to the next world.'

They all bowed their heads. They promised to live and act as advised by him.

## Duni Chand of Lahore

Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana continued to travel, on and on. One day, they arrived near Lahore. The Guru decided to stay outside the city. He sat on a green, grassy spot near the river Ravi. Sitting there, he fixed his thoughts on God. Bhai Mardana sang the Guru's sacred songs or hymns. Sometimes, the Guru himself would begin to sing them.

Soon, people began to gather around the Guru. They liked to hear the sacred songs. They liked to hear the Guru's talks. One day, a rich man of Lahore came to the Guru. He asked him to go with him to his house. The Guru said, 'I am all right here. I am not fond of grand houses. Moreover, my

visit to your house might cause you some trouble.'

But Duni Chand repeated his request, again and again. The Guru agreed, at last, to go with him to his house. On reaching there, the Guru saw a number of flags flying on Duni Chand's house. He smiled on seeing the flags.

Duni Chand took the Guru and his companion inside the house. He gave them good food to eat. He gave them cool water to drink. Then he sat near the Guru, with folded hands. After a time, the Guru said, 'A number of flags are lying on your roof. What are they for ? What do they mean ?'

Duni Chand replied, 'They are to show how much wealth I have. Every flag is a sign of one crore rupees (one crore is ten millions). The seven flags show that I possess seven crore rupees.'

The Guru said, 'Then you are a very

rich man. But are you happy and satisfied ?'

Duni Chand replied, 'Holy man, I must not lie to you. Some people are much richer than I. This makes me desire more and more. I want to be the richest man in the city. I cannot feel happy and satisfied until my desire is fulfilled.'

The Guru said, 'But the people richer than you must also be trying to become richer and richer. Thus, there is a race between them and you. Perhaps, you may not be able to beat them in this race for wealth. You may, therefore, never be happy. Have you ever thought of that ?'

Duni Chand said, 'Holy Sir, I have no time to think such thoughts.'

Guru Nanak smiled and said, 'Will you have time to do a small thing for me ?'

Duni Chand replied, 'Most gladly, my holy Sir. What can I do for you ?'

The Guru took out a needle, and said, 'Please keep it with you. Give it



The Guru took out a needle  
to me, when I ask for it, in the next  
world.'

Duni Chand took the needle to his wife. He gave it to her and said. 'The holy man wants us to keep the needle for him. He will take it back from us in

the next world.' She said, 'Are you mad? How can a needle go to the next world? How can we carry it with us there? Go back, and return it to the holy man.' Duni Chand went back to the Guru and said, 'Holy Sir, take back your needle. It cannot go to the next world. We cannot carry it there.'

The Guru smiled and said, 'The needle is small and light. You say that it cannot go with you to the next world. How can the seven or more crores of rupees go there with you? What good can this wealth do to you there?'

Duni Chand fell at the Guru's feet and said, 'Tell me how my wealth may go with me to the next world.'

The Guru said, 'Give it to the poor in the name of God. Feed the hungry. Clothe the naked. Help the needy. What you spend thus will go with you to the next world.'

Duni Chand accepted this advice. He gave away all his wealth to the poor.

The Guru explained to him his golden rules of life. Duni Chand became the Guru's Sikh. He began to live and act as advised by the Guru.

## 15

## Kauda, The Man-eater

Guru Nanak was still on his travels. Now he was going towards the Deccan. He wanted to go as far as Ceylon, now named Sri Lanka. Two *jat* Sikhs were with him. Their names were Saido and Siho. As usual he travelled by short stages. Everywhere he taught the people his golden rules of life and religion.

At one place, the Guru heard something painful and strange. In a jungle, nearby, there lived a tribe of man-eaters. They ate up every man, woman or child whom they could catch. Sometimes they entered villages. They took away men, women and children into the jungle. There they killed them and ate them for food.

On hearing this, the Guru became sad and thoughtful. He decided to act

at once. He must meet the man-eaters. He must make them give up their cruel way of life. He must end the unhappiness of the people. He must free them from fear of being eaten by the man-eaters.

He got ready to go. His two companions readily agreed to go with him. But the people said, 'Don't go, holy Sir. They will kill you and eat your flesh.' The Guru replied, 'No, I must do my duty. I must make them give up their cruel way of life. I want to make them live like good and Godfearing men. I have no fear. God is always with me. He will help me in this work. It is His work. He will save me from the man-eaters. Have no fear. Pray to God for my success. My success will bring joy to your people. It will teach the man-eaters a new and better way of life.'

Accordingly, the Guru, along with

his two companions, started towards the jungle. He had been told that the chief or head of the man-eaters was Kauda. He had also learnt where that chief man-eater lived. He decided to meet and reform him. If he succeeded there, then Kauda would reform others of his tribe.

With this end in view, the Guru started towards Kauda's place. Soon, he and his two companions were quite near it. Kauda saw three men coming. He was highly pleased. He used to go far to catch men for food. That day, three of them were coming to him of their own free will. That was lucky, indeed. He would have enough meat for many days.

He had a large, deep, frying pan full of oil. He lit fire under it, in order to make the oil boil. The three men had come very near. He felt the oil. It was as cool as before. The fire had lost the

power to heat the oil. He could not understand what had happened to the fire. He decided to roast one of the three on the fire direct. He would keep the other two safely bound. He would eat them later.



The Guru was, then, very near

The Guru and his companions were then just near. The Guru was in front. Kauda caught him in his arms. Guru Nanak smiled and said, '*Sat Kartar!*' Kauda was puzzled. He had caught

and eaten many men before. None of them had behaved in this manner. He threw the Guru into the fire. The Guru stood up in the fire. He was smiling at Kauda. Saido and Siho were saying aloud, '*Sat Kartar! Sat Kartar!*'

Kauda began to tremble. The Guru stepped out of the fire. Kauda did not push him back. He seemed to have lost his mind. He had lost the power to move. The Guru sat on the ground near the fire. He began to sing a sacred song. Kauda stood listening. His head was bowed. His hands were folded before him.

After a time, the Guru stopped singing. He looked at Kauda with a kind smile. Kauda fell at his feet. The Guru said, 'Rise, brother Kauda ! Give up your cruel way of life. Take a vow to harm no one. Be kind and merciful. Help and serve. Always remember God. Repeat His name. Earn your

bread with honest work. Share your earnings with others. Do all this yourself and teach others of your tribe to do the same.

Kauda promised to live and act as advised by the Guru. From a killer and eater of men he became a servant and teacher of men.

## 16

## God is Everywhere

For over twenty years, Guru Nanak had been on his travels. He had visited all parts of India. He had been to the east as far as Assam and Burma. To the South he had gone as far as Ceylon. To the north he had gone even to places outside India. Crossing the Himalayas, he had visited Tibet and China. He had travelled on foot. What a tireless traveller he was !

He had travelled so long and so far, but he was not yet satisfied. He now decided to go towards the west. His aim was to visit Muslim countries. He wanted to visit also, the Muslim mosques in those countries.

He chose Mecca as the first such place to visit. Mecca is in Arabia. It contains the most sacred Muslim

mosque that muslim mosque is called the Kaaba or the House of God. A visit to Mecca by a Muslim is called *haj*. A Muslim visitor to Mecca is called a *haji*. Guru Nanak decided to go on *haj*.

He put on the blue dress, worn by *hajis*. He took a fakir's staff, or stick in his hand. *Hajis* carry under their arms their sacred Book, the Quran. In place of that, the Guru carried a book of his sacred songs or hymns. Like the *hajis*, he had with him a *lota* or jug. He also carried a mat like the *hajis*. Dressed thus, he looked like a typical *haji*. All along, he acted in every way as *hajis* did. Bhai Mardana was with him. He, too, was dressed as a *haji*.

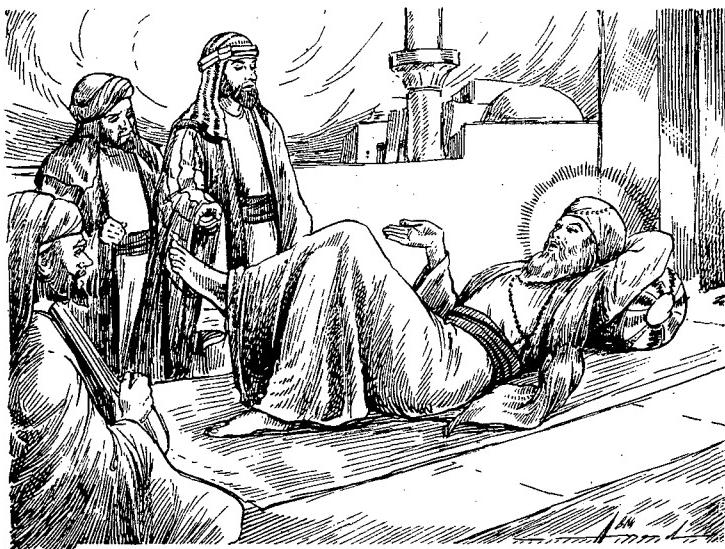
Boarding a ship at Surat, he reached the Arabian coast. From there, he walked on foot. He reached Mecca in due course.

By the time he arrived in Mecca, he was very tired. His feet were sore. He

needed rest. So he lay down to rest himself. He knew quite well that no Muslim would lie with his feet towards the Kaaba. But he wanted to draw the attention of the *hajis*, so that he could teach them his wisdom.

So, he lay down with his feet towards the Kaaba. All who saw him lying thus, began to shout and cry in anger. They gathered around him. They shouted at him. They threatened him. One of them was more angry than the others. His name was Jiwan. He kicked the Guru and said, ‘Who are you ? Why do you lie with your feet towards the House of God ?’

The Guru did not show any anger. In fact, he was never angry with anybody. He smiled at Jiwan. In a calm, sweet voice he said to him, ‘Brother, don’t be angry. I am very tired. I need rest. I respect the House of God as much as any one. Please turn my feet in a



“Please turn my feet in a direction in which  
God is not.

direction in which God or the House  
of God is not.’

Jiwan took hold of the Guru’s feet. He dragged them in the opposite direction. Then he lifted his eyes. He saw the Kaaba standing in the direction of the Guru’s feet. He turned the Guru’s feet in another direction. The Kaaba was seen standing in that direction. Jiwan dragged the Guru’s feet to this side and that. He dragged,

them round and round. The Kaaba was seen to be going round and round. It was always, in the direction of the Guru's feet. His feet were always towards the Kaaba.

Jiwan and the other *hajis* were all filled with wonder. Jiwan let go of the Guru's feet. The Guru got up and said, 'Don't you see that God's House is in every direction ? I tell you He dwells in every place, in every heart. He is in your hearts. He is also in mine.'

In the morning, a number of learned *hajis* gathered around the Guru. They held religious discussions with him. He satisfied every one of them. He explained to them his golden rules of life and religion. They listened to him with utmost attention. They agreed to live and act as advised by him. One of them said to the Guru, 'Holy Sir, give me something which will always remind me of you.' The Guru gave him his

pair of sandals. They were respectfully kept in the Kaaba for some time. That Muslim fakir then returned to India. He brought the sandals with him. He kept them in his temple at Uch in Bahawalpur, now in Pakistan.

## A Haughty Fakir

After travelling through Arabia and many other countries, the Guru returned to the Punjab. In due course, he reached a place called Hasan Abdal. It is about fifty kilometres from Rawalpindi in Pakistan.

He halted there at the foot of a hill. Soon, people began to gather around him. He talked to them of God. He told them of their duty to Him and to His children. More and more people began to gather around him every day.

On the top of that hill, there lived a Muslim fakir. His name was Bawa Wali Qandhari. His house was near a spring of fresh water. The water collected there in a small tank. From there it flowed down to the town. It was used by the people for all their needs. The

people had no water from any other place.

Wali Qandhari was a proud man. He saw people gathering around Guru Nanak. Very few people came to him on the hill now. This made him angry with the people. He made up his mind to punish them. He stopped the spring water from flowing down to the town.

The people became sad. How could they and their cattle live without water ! A group of them went to Bawa Wali Qandhari. They begged him to let the water flow down as before. But he paid no heed to their request. He said angrily, 'Go to him. Ask him to give you water.'

They went to the Guru. They told the whole story to him. He said to them, 'Don't lose heart. Trust in God. He will not let you die of thirst. Bawa Wali Qandhari's anger will cool. He will feel pity for you all.'

The Guru then said to Bhai Mardana, 'Go and appeal to Bawa Wali Qandhari in the name of God. Request him to let the water flow down to the town.'

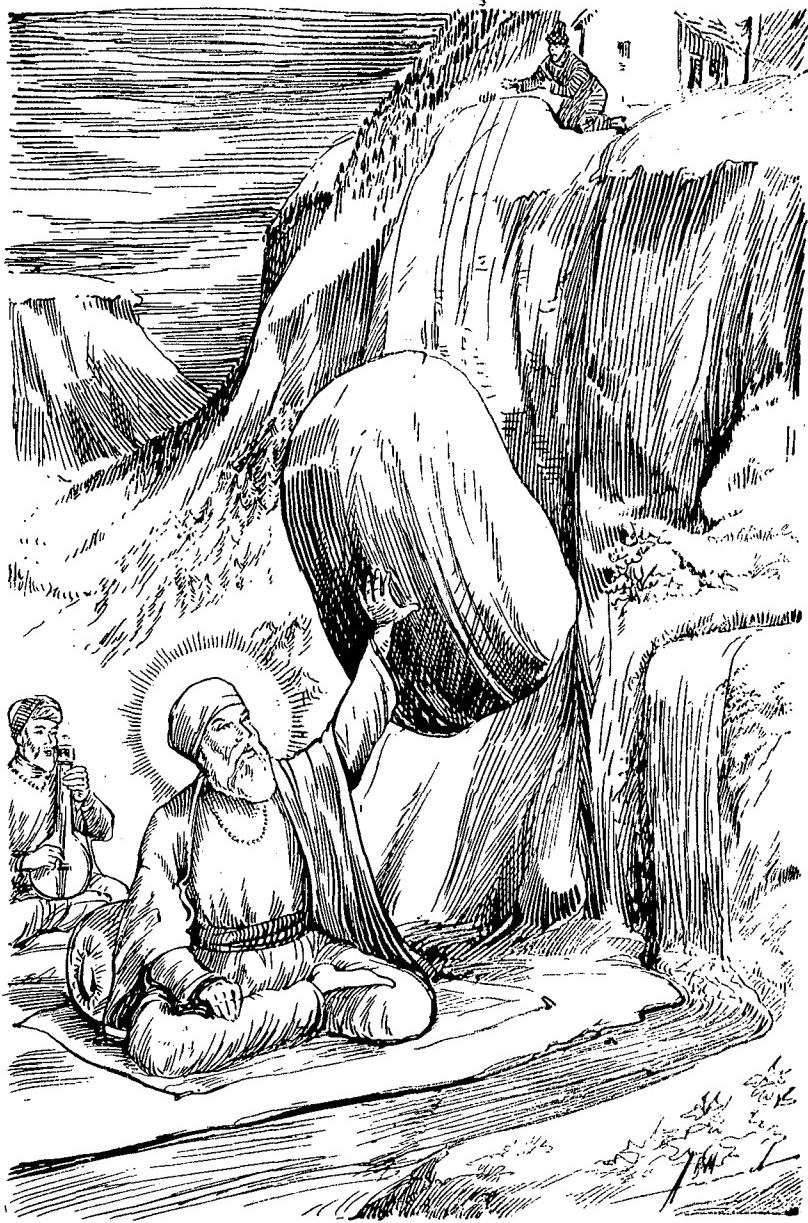
Bhai Mardana went to Bawa Wali Qandhari. He repeated the Guru's request to him. He appealed to him in the name of God. But Wali Qandhari shouted angrily, 'Go back to him. Ask him to give water to the people there.'

Bhai Mardana returned to the Guru. He told him the whole story. The Guru told him to go to the fakir once again. 'Beg him,' he said, 'in the name of God to have pity on the people.'

Bhai Mardana obeyed. But the fakir paid no attention to his appeals. Bhai Mardana returned to the Guru. He told him of his failure. The Guru sent him once again. But again he came back with the same story.

The people became very worried. The Guru said to them, 'Don't lose heart, good people. God is great and merciful. He can make springs flow where He likes. Let us all pray to Him.' They all prayed to God. The Guru also prayed with them. Then he lifted a stone. At once, a stream of cool, clean water began to flow. It washed the Guru's feet. It then flowed towards the town. The people were filled with joy.

At the same time, Bawa Wali Qandhari's spring dried up. He was red with anger. He pushed a large rock towards the Guru. He thought that it would fall on the Guru. It would crush him to death. It came rolling down towards the Guru. He quietly raised his hand. The rock struck it and stopped. A print of the Guru's hand was made on the rock. The rock still exists. There is a beautiful gurdwara at that



The rock struck the hand and stopped

place. It is called Panja Sahib or the Holy Hand Print.

Bawa Wali Qandhari's pride was broken. He came down and fell at the Guru's feet. The Guru said to him, 'Rise, brother fakir. Live as lovers of God should live. Be kind to all.' He then explained to him his golden rules of life. Bawa Wali Qandhari agreed to live and act according to those rules.

## With Babar

Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana continued their travels. During these travels, the Guru visited Eminabad, once more. This time also he went to Bhai Lalo's house. He lived and dined with him as before.

After some time, Babar fell upon Eminabad. He wanted to become emperor of India. He had conquered many places already. He wanted to conquer Eminabad also. The rulers and the people of that place fought well. But they were defeated. Many of them were killed. Others were taken prisoners. Their houses were looted. The poor, unhappy people were made to carry their own looted property to Babar's camp.

Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana

were also taken prisoner. The Guru was given a load to carry. Bhai Mardan was told to take care of a horse.

Guru Nanak's heart was filled with sadness. He was sad not because he had to carry a heavy load. He was sad to see the condition of the people around him. They were unhappy. He wanted to make them a little less unhappy. He began to sing a sweet, holy song in praise of God. All who heard the song became a little less unhappy. They began to think of God. A large number of them forgot their sorrow. They dried their tears. They became calm. They thanked the holy man for his sweet, holy song.

On reaching the camp, all were made to grind corn. Guru Nanak was also given a handmill and some corn to grind. He saw the unhappy people around him. His heart was filled with

pity. He began to sing again. The prisoners forgot their sorrow. They forgot their handmills. They sat with folded hands, listening to the Guru's sweet, holy songs of God. The handmills went on working as before.

Babar's men saw this strange thing. They were filled with wonder. They ran to Babar. They told him what they had seen.



"What were you singing, O holy fakir?"

Babar went to the prison at once. He saw Guru Nanak sitting with closed eyes, singing in a sweet voice. All other prisoners were sitting with folded hands. They were listening to his song. Babar also stood listening. He did not understand the meaning of the song. But he liked it. The Guru stopped singing after a time. He opened his eyes. Babar said to him, 'What were you singing, O holy fakir ?'

Guru Nanak replied, 'I was calling upon God to see what you have done. You have killed innocent men, women and children. You have looted their homes. Now you make them do hard work for you. They did you no harm. Why should you be so cruel to them ? God is the Father of all. He is your Father as well as theirs. I am calling upon Him to see what you are doing to His innocent children.'

Guru Nanak's words touched Babar's

heart. He felt ashamed. He felt sad. He felt sorry for what he had done. He bowed to the Guru. He wanted to please the Guru. He said, 'O holy man, what can I do for you ?' Guru Nanak replied, 'Set all you prisoners free. Return their property to them.'

Babar did all this. Then he said to the Guru, 'Do one act of kindness for me. I wish to become emperor of India. Pray for me.'

The Guru replied, 'Your wish shall be fulfilled. But you must be a just and kind ruler. You should do your best to make your people happy. Be a good man. Do not drink wine. Do not gamble. Respect holy men. Be merciful to those whom you defeat. Be specially kind to women and children. Above all, always remember God. Do nothing that might displease Him.'

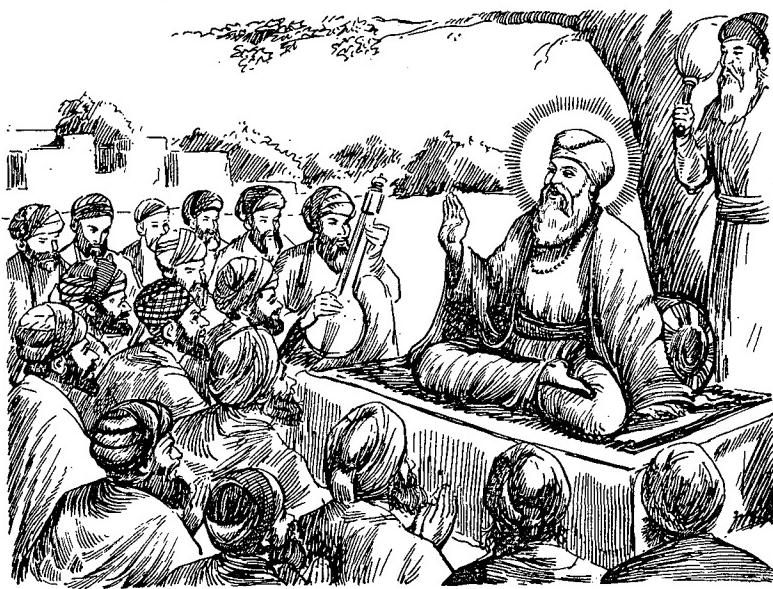
Babar agreed to act as advised by the Guru.

## A Happy Family

After completing his four great tours, Guru Nanak returned to Kartarpur. He decided to spend the remaining days of his life there. During his tours, he had dressed himself like a *sadhu* or fakir. Now he took off that dress. Instead of that, he put on clothes worn by ordinary Punjabis.

Once more he began to show everyone how a man of religion should live and act. He was over sixty years of age. He had spent a very busy and active life. It was time for him to take a rest. But he did not like to sit idle. He wanted to be active to the last day of his life. He wanted to be a useful member of society.

His daily programme started three hours before sunrise. He got up at that



The sikhs gathered to listen to his talks

early hour. After taking his bath, he fixed his mind on God. He recited and sang the sacred hymns. At daybreak, he went to the place where his Sikhs had gathered. They gathered there in order to listen to his talks on life and religion.

After that, he spent his time as a good man of the world should do. Guru Nanak was over sixty years old. Still, his body was healthy and strong.

It had to be so. He took plenty of exercise all through the day. He took exercise by doing hard useful work. He worked in his fields regularly, every day, like a good, active farmer. In the fields he raised crops for the use of his big family. All who gathered at Kartarpur were members of his family. He also worked in his *langar*, or free kitchen for all. He took simple but good and wholesome food. His rule regarding food was, 'Don't eat or drink anything which might harm your body or mind.' He was always calm and cheerful. He loved to have a hearty laugh sometimes. He spent most of his time in the company of his people. The rest of his time was spent in the company of God. He was always actively busy in doing good to others. He expected his Sikhs to follow his example.

Guru Nanak's *langar*, or free kitchen,

was open to all who needed food. But there was no place in it for mere idlers or people who did not do any work.

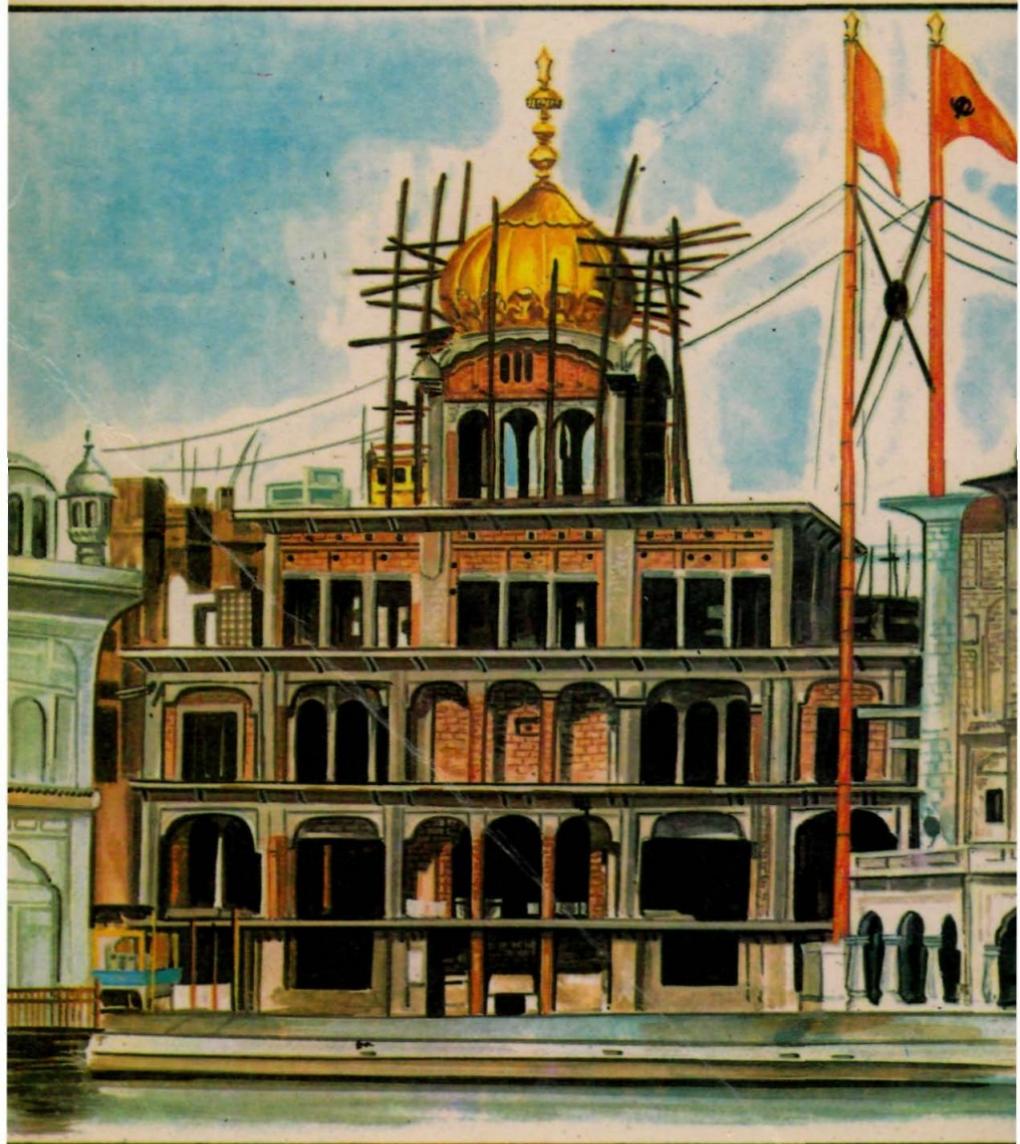
All who lived there had to do some useful work.

In this *langar*, people of all castes ate their food together. They all sat side by side. They lived and worked like members of one good family. Guru Nanak was the Chief or Head of that family. He was the dear Father of all his people.

Guru Nanak's family at Kartarpur was a mixed family. In it there were people who had been Hindus before they joined it. There were those who had been Muslims before joining Guru Nanak's family. There were those who had belonged to low castes. There were those who had belonged to high castes. There were those who had been treated as untouchables. Here, in this family, all were equal. They formed

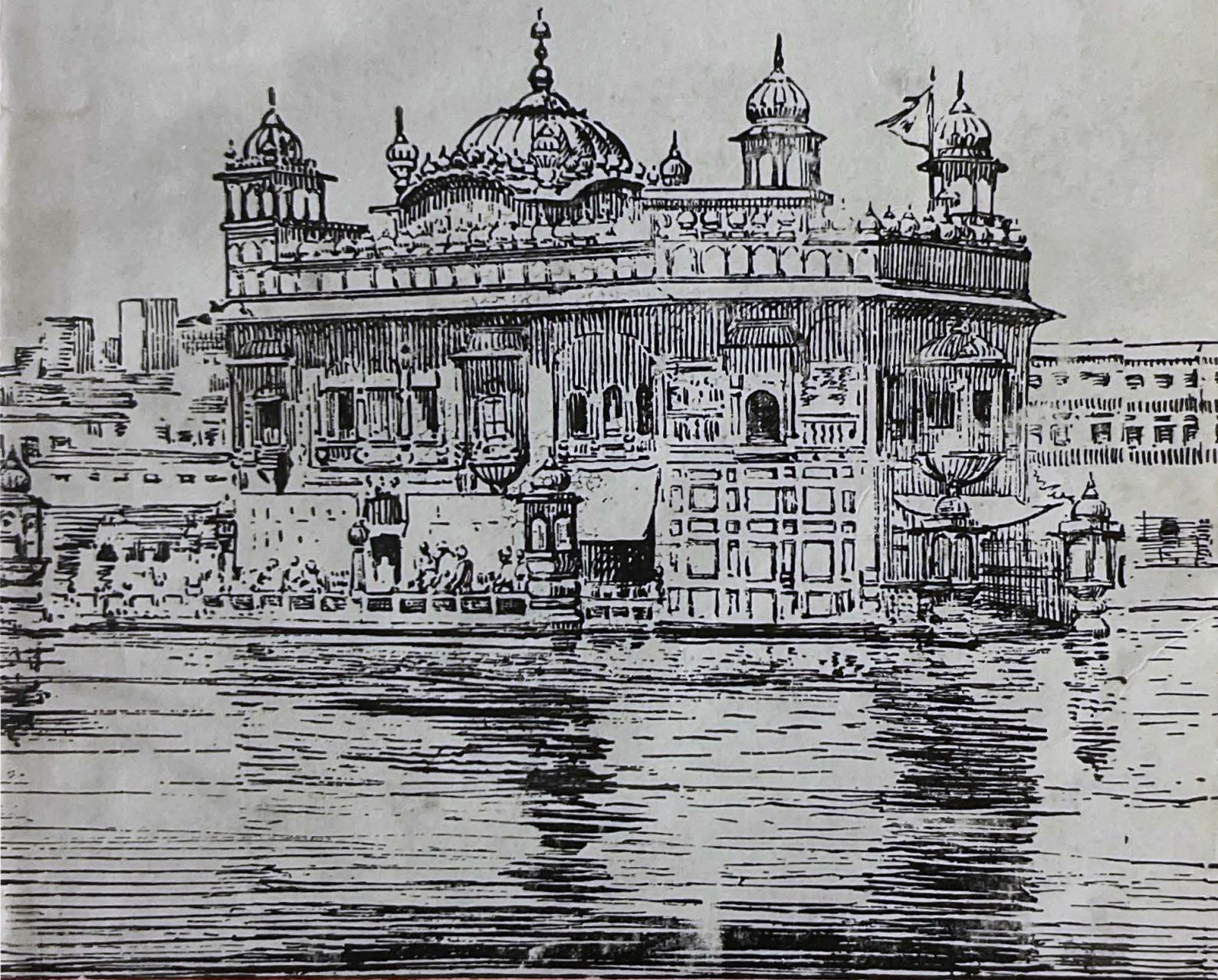
a brotherhood of saints and workers. There were no idlers. All had to work. Some worked in the fields. Some did service in the common kitchen. Everyone worked for the good of all.

Guru Nanak's was, indeed, a lucky, happy family. He wanted his Sikhs to live together like one family. We should all remember his wishes in this matter. We Should all live in peace and friendship, like members of one good family. If we do so, he will be pleased with us.



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&  
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## **FOREWORD**

Moral and religious instruction, I am glad to find is now being rehabilitated in our schools. Our country is secular, it is true, but there is no denying the fact that religious and moral education has a very useful function to serve. It is in this context that the Sri Prakasa Committee recommended moral instruction at the school level in order to develop the personality of students.

Modern psychology has emphasized that if the child is given proper guidance at his formative stages it will greatly help integrate his personality.

The great figures of the past specially the heroes of history have shown mankind how to fight successfully against evil and face the challenges from time to time. Among the great heroes of Indian History are the Sikh Gurus. Through their example, they challenged superstition, inertia, tyranny and bigotry. Their life story is a beacon light which gives inspiration to all who seek guidance in the path of truth and righteous action.

The youth of today more than any other section of society, is at the cross-roads. School students are dazed by the march of exciting events and the great tensions of the modern world. Science may throw light on the physical world, but it is only the teachings of great saints and sages which offer a glimpse into the spiritual world. Any educational system which does not take into account the moral development of the student will remain inadequate and ineffective. I am glad to know

that thoughtful educationists are devoting their attention to the moral education of the young. In this context, the efforts of Principal G.S. Dhillon and Prof. Kartar Singh deserve all appreciation.

In this book the authors have presented a number of stories from the lives of Guru Angad, Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram Das and Guru Arjan Dev in a broad and vivid manner. These, I am sure, will be a source of inspiration to our growing young men.

The pictures and sketches given therein, I am sure, will create a lasting impression on their minds. I sincerely hope that the series of Stories from Sikh History which they have planned will go a long way in moulding the lives of the young Indian students.

*4th February, 1972*

**GANDA SINGH**  
Ph. D., D. Litt.

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## A Durga Worshipper at Kartarpur

Sri Laihna was a pious man who lived at Khadur in the district of Amritsar. He was a shopkeeper. He was a good and honest man. He was very rich. He used to worship goddess Durga. Many other people of his village did the same. He was their leader. Every year a large group of them used to visit the temple of that goddess. The temple is called Jawalamukhi. It is in the Himalayas. Bhai Laihna used to go with these worshippers of Durga as their leader. On his hands and feet he wore bells. He used to dance before the goddess. The bells used to tinkle when he danced.

He went on doing this till he grew to be an old man. In his village there lived a Sikh or follower of Guru Nanak. His name was Bhai Jodha. He was not a worshipper of Durga. No Sikh worships

any god or goddess. All Sikhs are worshippers of one God. Bhai Jodha did not visit Durga's temple. On the other hand, he used to think of God. He used to recite or read aloud holy songs or hymns of Guru Nanak. One day, Sri Laihna heard him singing one of those sweet, sacred songs. He liked it very much. He requested Bhai Jodha to teach it to him. Bhai Jodha did so with pleasure. He also told him of Guru Nanak. The Guru was an old man by that time. He lived at Kartarpur. That town is now in Pakistan.

Sri Laihna made up his mind to see the Guru. A short time after that he and his fellow-villagers started on their annual visit to Jawalamukhi. They halted for the night near Kartarpur. While his companions took rest, Sri Laihna started towards the town. He was on horseback. He was eager to see Guru Nanak.

On the way, he met a tall, strong and cheerful looking old man. ‘O good man,’ said Sri Laihna to him, ‘kindly tell me the way to Guru Nanak’s place.’

‘Follow me, dear brother,’ replied the old man. ‘I am going that way myself.’

The old man led the way on foot. Sri Laihna followed him on horse-back. Soon, they reached the town. The old man pointed towards a gate and said, ‘Enter there. That is the place, my dear.’

Sri Laihna went in. He tied his horse to a peg in the compound. He then looked about for the Guru. A man guided him to the door of a room and said, ‘The Guru is in that room. He is alone. Go in and see him, brother.’

Sri Laihna entered the room. He was greatly surprised at what he saw. The old man sitting there was the same who had led his horse to this place. This made Sri Laihna very sad. He said to himself,



*Enter there. That is the place, my dear.*

‘I did a wrong thing. I rode while the Guru walked before me.’

Guru Nanak guessed what was passing in Sri Laihna’s mind. ‘Don’t be sad, my brother,’ said he. ‘You did nothing wrong. I did my duty. You are my guest. I am your host. It is the duty of a host to serve his guests. I did that. I did nothing more. Come, sit near me. Let us talk. Let us know each other.’

‘How kind and sweet he is !’ thought Sri Laihna. He sat near the Guru. Soon they were talking like old, intimate friends. Sri Laihna learnt many new and good things from the Guru. His heart was filled with deep love and respect for him. He decided to give up worshipping Durga. He would worship God instead of the goddess. He would become a Sikh or follower of the Guru. He threw away the bells from his hands and feet. In the morning he met his companions. He said to them, ‘I do not wish to go to

Jawalamukhi. I shall not worship any goddess any more. I have decided to worship God in Guru Nanak's company.' His companions went away. He remained with the Guru. He became his Sikh. He began to be called Bhai Laihna.

## Work and Service

Bhai Laihna's companions left for Jawalamukhi. He stayed at Kartarpur. After a few days, he said to himself, 'Let me go to my village. Let me take leave of my family and friends. Then I shall come back and stay with the Guru for good.'

He did not stay in his village for more than a few days. He soon got ready to return to Kartarpur. He wanted to be with the Guru. He wanted to serve him. He wanted to learn true wisdom from him.

Before starting he said to himself, 'I must take with me something for the Guru. He runs a free kitchen. Scores of people take their meals from there. They do not have to pay anything for the meals. I should take something for his *langar* or free kitchen for all. But what should it be? Yes, let it be as heavy a load of salt as I can carry on my head.'

He reached Kartarpur. He went there on foot. He carried a load of salt on his head. It was as heavy as he could carry. He placed the load of salt in the Guru's *langar*. He then went out to see the Guru, who was working in the field.

He reached the field and saw that the Guru had prepared three bundles of grass for his cattle. He wanted that someone should carry them home. He desired his two sons to do so. They said, 'Such work is not fit for sons of the Guru. Some Sikh should do it. Perhaps, that man, coming this way, might agree to do it. Let us wait for him.'

Bhai Laihna heard these words. He was glad to get a chance to serve the Guru. He said to the Guru, 'Let me carry the bundles home.' He carried the three bundles of grass to the Guru's place. The grass had been taken out from a paddy field. It was wet. Drops of muddy water fell from it, now and then. They fell upon his clothes. His clothes were made of fine

silk. The drops of muddy water spoiled his fine, new silk clothes. But this did not make him sorry. He was glad to obey and serve the Guru. The Guru was greatly pleased with his new Sikh, Bhai Laihna.

The Guru taught the golden rules of his religion to all who came to him. He also worked in the fields like a farmer. He also thought of God all the time. He repeated His name. His Sikhs also did the same. Some worked in the fields. Some worked in the common kitchen. Some brought dry woods for the *langar*. Others did other duties in order to prepare articles needed for the Guru's family. They did not want any payment for such work. They did it all out of their love for the Guru and his Sikhs. It was all a labour of love. They also thought of God all the time. The Guru loved them for this.

Bhai Laihna began to work like other Sikhs. He worked more actively than the rest. He loved to obey and serve the Guru. He did whatever the Guru wished

him to do. He found real joy in doing this. He thought of God at all times. He repeated His name. He learnt and recited the Guru's hymns.

The Guru began to love Bhai Laihna very dearly. His love for Bhai Laihna was greater than his love for any other Sikh. It was greater than even his love for his own two sons. They did not obey and serve him as well as he did.

Bhai Laihna began to be respected highly by all Sikhs.

They began to call him Baba Laihna. By serving and working for the Guru, Bhai Laihna became Baba Laihna. But this fact did not produce any feeling of pride in him. It did not make him think himself to be better or higher than the rest. Rather, it made him humbler, more sweet and more eager to serve the Guru and his Sikhs. As a consequence, he grew more and more popular ; more and more deeply respected. The Guru's love for him went on increasing, day by day.

## **Who Should Take Guru Nanak's Place?**

Guru Nanak used to say, 'Every Sikh should obey his Guru without asking any questions. To obey and serve the Guru should be the Sikh's rule of life.' Baba Laihna lived and acted in accordance with the Guru's wishes. He obeyed all orders of Guru Nanak most readily and joyfully. He asked no questions. He never said, 'Why or what for ?'

Guru Nanak tested Baba Laihna several times. Every time Baba Laihna was found to be up to the mark. Here are some of those tests.

( 1 )

One winter night it rained very heavily. A part of the wall of the Guru's house fell. He said that it must be built up again at once. He called upon his sons to do the work. They refused to do it. They said, 'It is midnight. The night is dark and

cold. Moreover, it is no business of ours to build walls. Let it be day. We shall call masons and coolies. They will build the wall.'

The Guru said, 'It is the Guru's work. It must be done by his Sikhs. There is no need of masons and coolies. It has to be done just now.'

The Guru looked at Baba Laihna. The latter at once got up. He began to build up the wall. After a time the Guru saw the wall built by Baba Laihna. He said, 'The wall is not straight. Pull it down and build it again more carefully.'

Baba Laihna obeyed at once. He built up the wall again very carefully. But the Guru was still not satisfied. Baba Laihna pulled it down once more. He built it up again with the utmost care. When the Guru saw it, he said, 'The wall should not have been built here. It should be moved back about half a foot.'

Baba Laihna obeyed without asking

any question. He pulled down the wall again. He built it up in the place desired by the Guru. But the Guru was not satisfied. Baba Laihna again pulled down the wall. He began to build it again with care.

Upon this the Guru's sons said to Baba Laihna, 'You can never please him. Give up the work.'

But Baba Laihna replied, 'A servant has to do his master's work. It is for the master to choose what that work should be.'

( 2 )

One day, the Guru was holding a cup. It slipped from his hand. It fell into a pit of dirty water. The Guru told his sons to take it out of the dirty pit. They refused to do so.

The Guru then looked at Baba Laihna. Baba Laihna entered the pit at once. He brought out the cup. He then washed it with clean water and gave it to the Guru.



*The three Sikhs went away.*

The Guru used to get up three hours before day and go to bathe in the Ravi. Baba Laihna always went with him. He sat near the Guru's clothes, while the Guru bathed. One day three other Sikhs decided to do as Baba Laihna did. They wanted to please the Guru as Baba Laihna had pleased him. They went with the Guru. It was the winter season. Soon black clouds gathered in the sky. A cold wind began to blow. Then hail began to fall. The three Sikhs could not bear the cold. They went back. But Baba Laihna did not move. He waited there till the Guru came out. The Guru said, 'The others went away. Why didn't you do the same ?' Baba Laihna replied, 'A servant should not run away from his master. How could I go, leaving my master here ?'

Guru Nanak gave a few more tests to Baba Laihna. He was successful in every one of them. Guru Nanak was fully satisfied. He said to Baba Laihna, 'You have

become as dear to me as my own self. You are my *Angad*, a part of my *ang* or body.'

After a time the Guru felt that the time for his leaving the world was at hand. He seated Sri Angad on the Guru's throne. He told Bhai Budha to put a *tilak*, the mark of Guruship, on his forehead.

He placed five paise and a coconut before Sri Angad. Then he bowed before him. 'You are now Guru Angad,' said Guru Nanak. He told his Sikhs to bow before the Guru.

Thus through work, service and obedience, Sri Laihna became Guru Angad, the second Guru Nanak.

## Guru Angad and the Tapa

Guru Nanak chose Baba Laihna to take his place after him. He changed his name to Sri Angad. Then he seated him on the Guru's throne. He appointed him the Guru in his own place. Thus Guru Angad became the second Guru of the Sikhs.

Guru Angad lived at Khadur Sahib, near Tarn Taran. His home was in that village. He lived there with his family like a house-holder. At the same time, he acted as the Guru.

In that village there lived at that time a *sadhu*. He was a *jogi*. His name was Shiv Nath. People called him Tapa. He tried all he could to appear a truly religious man. But really he was not truly religious. He was only making a show of religion. He was proud. He wanted the

people to worship him as a Guru. Some *jats* of that place did worship him as a Guru. He was much pleased with them.

But Guru Angad was becoming popular. Everyday more and more people began to gather around him for advice and help. They liked his teachings. They began to regard him as their Guru. The number of people going to the Tapa became less and less. He began to be less and less popular with the people. This made him burn with anger against Guru Angad. He said to himself, 'I must get him turned out of this place.'

One year, there was no rain. Not even a drop of rain fell during the rainy months. Crops began to dry up. Fields could not be ploughed and prepared for the next crop. There was a fear of famine. All tanks became dry. Cattle could not get enough water to drink. They died in large numbers. The people were very sad. They did not know what to do. Some of them

went to the Tapa. They begged him to save them. They appealed to him to cause rain to fall.

The Tapa said, ‘How can you expect rain to fall here ? You are doing something totally against true religion. The rain-god is angry with you. I am a *jogi*, a truly religious man. I have no family. I give my whole time and thought to religion. You have left coming to me. You do not worship me. Instead, you now worship a family man. You regard him as your Guru. Ask him to cause rain to fall. If he refuses or fails to do so, turn him out of your village. I shall then cause rain to fall within twenty-four hours.’

The *jats* were simple people. They were in great misery. They were very much in need of rain. They decided to do as advised by the Tapa. They went to the Guru and said, ‘Kindly cause rain to fall or leave the village. If you go away, the Tapa will cause rain to fall. We shall be saved.’

The Guru said, 'It is God alone who causes rain to fall. But if my going away from here can get you rain, I shall gladly go.'

The Guru left Khadur. The Tapa read many *mantras*. He did many things to please the rain-god. But rain did not fall. The people began to shout at the Tapa in great anger. He did not know what to do.

By that time, Sri Amar Das arrived at Khadur. As you will see, Sri Amar Das was to be the third Guru. He heard what had happened. He felt sad and angry. He said to the people, 'The Tapa has played a joke with you. He has made you do something very bad. I tell you the way to get rain. Take the Tapa into your fields. Wherever you take him before sunset, rain will fall in plenty there.'

The people caught hold of the Tapa. They dragged him from field to field. Rain fell wherever he was taken. Everybody wanted to drag him into his own fields.

Thus dragged this way and that, the Tapa breathed his last.

Guru Angad heard all this. He called for Sri Amar Das and said to him, 'You should have a large heart. All happens according to God's Will. It is not good for us to feel anger against any man for what happens. A Sikh should ever do good even to the bad ones. He should return good for evil. He should forgive all wrong-doers. He should try to bring the wrong-doers to the right path. Never do such a thing again. We should accept God's Will, most readily and willingly.'

## **Humayun and Guru Angad**

Babar had come from Kabul with a large army. He wanted to be emperor of India. His wish was fulfilled. He became the first Mughul Emperor of India.

He died after a few years. His son, Humayun, became the Emperor in his place. But a few years later Sher Shah Suri made up his mind to become the emperor of India. So he decided to drive away Humayun and take his throne. He fought a number of battles against Humayun. Humayun was defeated. He ran for his life.

After some time, he reached Lahore. He decided to see some holy men or saints. He wanted that they should pray for his success in getting back the throne of Delhi. He believed that the prayers of

holy men were granted by God. So he thought, 'If I can find a really holy man, my wish can be fulfilled. He will pray for my success in getting back my throne. His prayer will be granted. I shall again become the emperor of India. But where to find such a holy man ?'

Some people told him, 'Your father met Guru Nanak at Eminabad. He begged the Guru to pray for him. The Guru agreed to pray for your father's success. His prayer was granted by God.'

'Then,' said Humayun, 'I, too, shall see him. I shall beg him to pray for me. His prayer will again be granted. I shall get back my throne. But where is he ?'

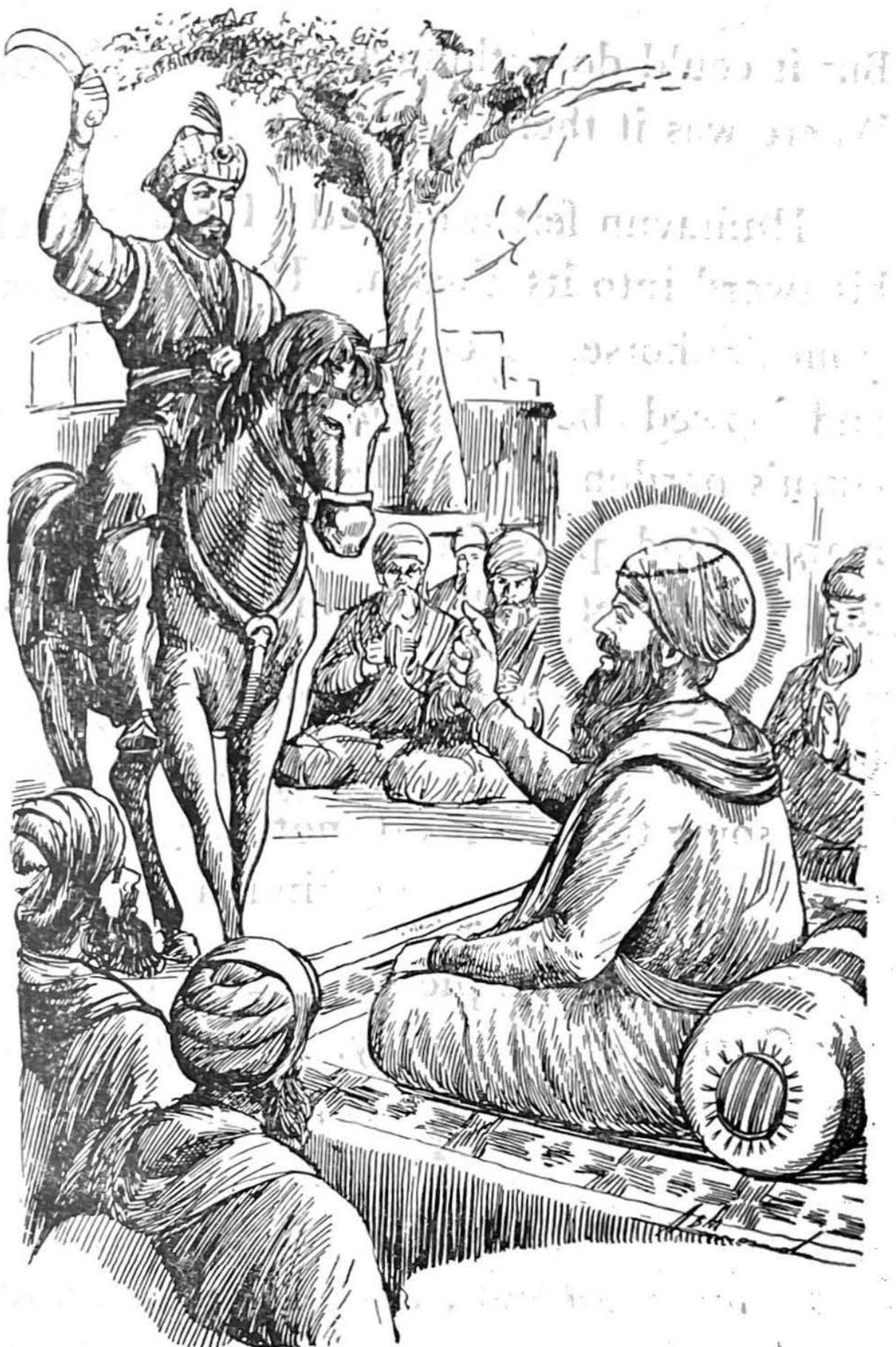
He was told, 'Guru Nanak is no more in the world. He chose Guru Angad to take his place after him. Guru Angad lives at Khadur, near Tarn Taran.'

Hearing this Humayun got ready to go to Khadur. He took with him a number

of things. He wanted to offer them to the Guru. In due course he reached Khadur. He went to the Guru's place on horseback. He did not get down from the horse on reaching the Guru's presence. He remained sitting on the horse. He thought that the Guru would get up to meet and greet him.

At that time the Guru's mind was fixed on God. Sikhs were singing hymns. The Guru did not notice Humayun. At this, Humayun became angry. He said to himself, 'I am the Emperor. He is a mere fakir. He has not stood up to show respect to me. He has paid no heed to me. He has insulted me. I must punish him.'

Thinking thus, he drew his sword. He wanted to cut off the Guru's head with the sword. The Guru opened his eyes. He looked at Humayun. Then he smiled and said, 'O Emperor, your sword comes out so readily to strike men of God.'



*"Your sword comes out to strike men of God."*

But it could do nothing against Sher Shah.  
Where was it then ?'

Humayun felt ashamed. He put back his sword into its sheath. He got down from the horse. He went near the Guru and bowed before him. He begged the Guru's pardon. Then he said, 'O holy man of God, pray for me. Pray to God that I may get back my throne.'

The Guru replied, 'I shall pray for you. You will get back your kingdom after some time. But do not forget God even then. Be a just and kind ruler.'

Humayun was pleased. He bowed to the Guru and went away. He got back his throne after some time.

## The Home of the Homeless

Sri Amar Das lived in his village Basarke, near Amritsar. He was over sixty years of age. He was a shopkeeper. His brother's son or nephew was married to Guru Angad's daughter. Her name was Bibi Amro. It was her practice to get up three hours before day. Then she bathed and began to recite the *Japji* and other hymns of Guru Nanak.

Early one morning Sri Amar Das was sitting on a cot on the roof of his house. He heard Bibi Amro singing Guru Nanak's sacred songs. The hymns had a strong effect on him. He liked them very much. He sat listening attentively.

After daybreak, Sri Amar Das said to Bibi Amro, 'Whose hymns were you reciting? Where and from whom did you learn them?' She replied, 'They are Guru Nanak's hymns. I learnt them from my

father. He is the second Guru of the Sikhs. You may learn them from me.'

Sri Amar Das learnt the hymns by heart. Then he asked her to take him to her father. He added, 'I want to become his Sikh.'

She did as desired. They reached Khadur Sahib. He went straight to the Guru. Sri Amar Das was an uncle of Guru Angad's son-in-law. He was also more than twenty years older than the Guru. Hence, on seeing Sri Amar Das, Guru Angad stood up to receive him. But Sri Amar Das fell at the Guru's feet. He said, 'I am here not as a relative of yours. I have come to be your servant. Please make me a Sikh. Let me serve you.'

Guru Angad Dev granted his wish. Sri Amar Das began to live at Khadur Sahib. He spent his time in serving the Guru and his Sikhs. All the time he kept his mind fixed on God. He learnt by heart a large number of the Guru's hymns.

He got up four or five hours before day. He went to the river Beas. The river was about five kilometres from Khadur Sahib. He bathed in the river. He brought from there a pitcher of water for the Guru's bath. Rain, hail, or storm could not make him fail in this work. It should be remembered that Sri Amar Das was over sixty years old.

After giving bath to the Guru, Sri Amar Das began to work in the Guru's *langar* or free kitchen for all. He supplied well-water for use in the kitchen. He brought firewood from the forest. He cleaned and washed the utensils. He did everything else that was required to be done.

Twelve years passed in this way. Once he started towards the river as usual. It began to rain heavily. At the same time a strong wind began to blow. The night was dark. Sri Amar Das reached the river. He started back with the pitcher of water

on his head. He had to walk in knee-deep water in some places. Because of the rain, the wind, and the dark, he lost his way. There was a weaver's house near the path. His foot struck against a peg. He fell into the hole of the weaver's loom. But he did not let the pitcher fall from his head.

The weaver woke up on hearing the sound of Sri Amar Das's fall. He said to his wife, 'Somebody seems to have fallen into the loom's hole. I wonder who is going about in this weather and at this hour.' His wife said, 'It must be the poor homeless Amru. He has left his home, family and business. He has taken shelter with his nephew's father-in-law. He works day and night in order to get food. What should I say about the Guru who takes such work from such a man?'

Sri Amar Das was pained to hear her words against her Guru. He said, 'You have gone mad. That is why you say such things against the Guru.' Saying this, he

went away with the pitcher of water for the Guru's bath.

The weaver's wife actually went mad. The weaver went to the Guru in the morning. He told the Guru what had happened. He begged him to pardon the mad woman's error. The Guru said, 'Sri Amar Das is not poor and homeless. He shall be the home for the homeless, the shelter for the unsheltered, the strength for the weak, and the protector of those in trouble. The peg against which he struck his foot will grow green. The weaver's wife shall become all right.'

After that he bathed Sri Amar Das. He dressed him in new clothes. He seated him on the Guru's *gaddi* or throne. He placed five copper coins and a coconut before him. He ordered Bhai Budha to put a *tilak* mark on his forehead. Then the Guru bowed before Sri Amar Das. He then said, 'Sri Amar Das is Guru Amar Das now. He will be the Guru after me.'

## **Guru Amar Das Hides Himself**

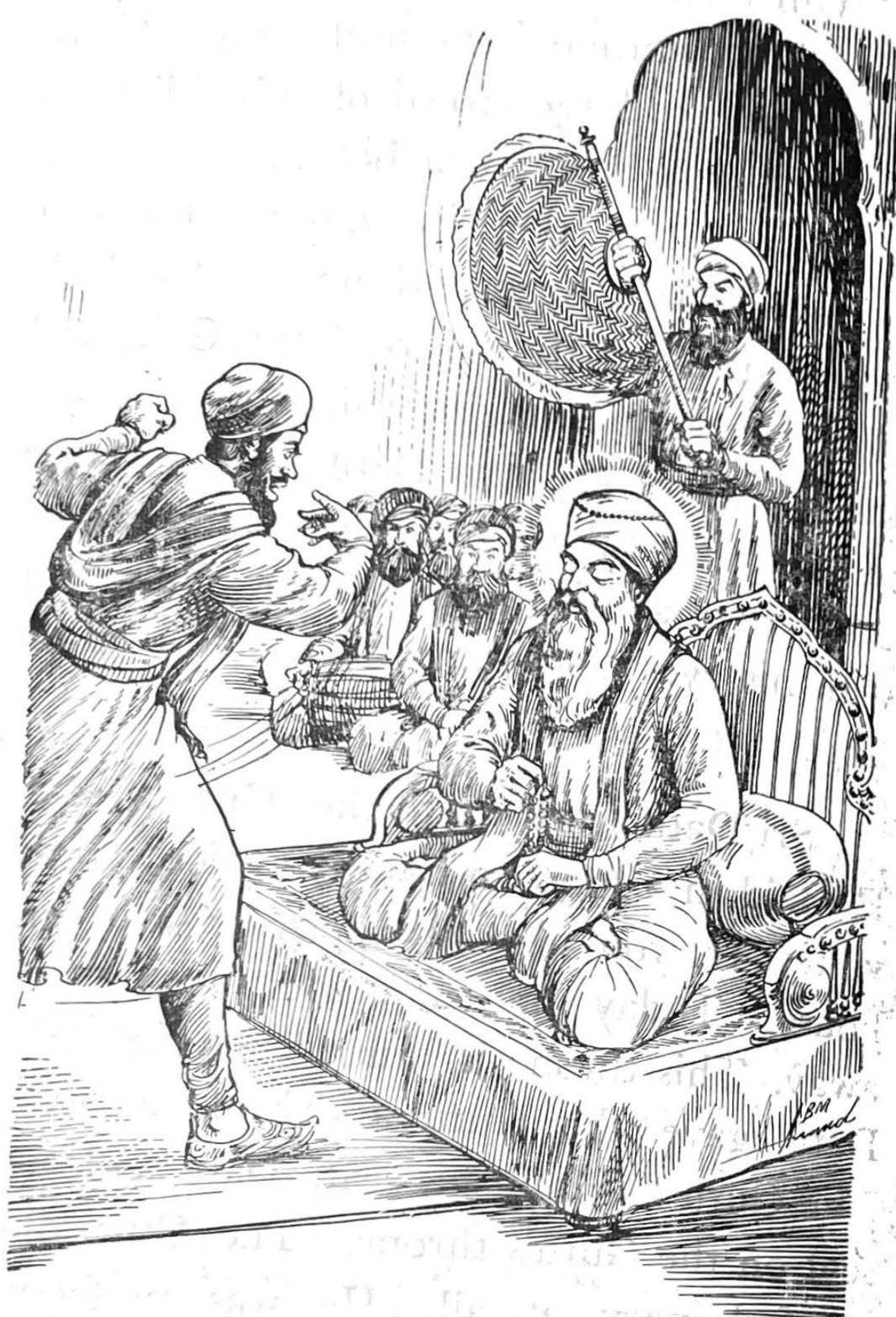
Guru Angad had chosen Sri Amar Das to take his place after him. Some time after that he said to Guru Amar Das, 'My time to go from the world is coming near. When I am gone, go to Goindwal. Live there and save people by your teachings.' Guru Amar Das obeyed his Guru's last order.

After Guru Angad's death, his son Sri Datu sat on the Guru's throne at Khadur Sahib. He made it known to all, 'Amru (Guru Amar Das) was my father's servant. He is *my* servant now. My father's *gaddi* (throne) is mine. I am the Guru.'

But the Sikhs did not accept him as their Guru. They said, 'Our true Guru is Guru Amar Das. He was chosen by Guru Angad Dev.' So they all went to Goindwal. Sri Datu was left alone. Naturally enough, this made him angry.

Guru Amar Das lived at Goindwal. His Sikhs gathered around him. There was always a large crowd of his followers at this place. The Guru became more and more popular, day by day. This fact made Sri Datu burn with anger. He decided to turn out the Guru from Goindwal also. He went to Goindwal. On reaching the Guru's place, Sri Datu saw a large number of Sikhs gathered there. Some Sikhs were singing hymns. The Guru sat with his eyes closed and his mind fixed on God.

Sri Datu went up to the Guru's seat. He said in a loud and angry voice, 'Only yesterday you were a water-carrier in our house. Today you sit as the Guru. Get away. This throne is mine.' Saying this, Datu gave the Guru a kick in the back. The Guru fell from his seat. Datu took his seat on the Guru's throne. The Guru did not feel angry at all. He was perfectly calm. He got up and began to press Sri



*'Get away. This throne is mine.'*

Datu's foot. At the same time he said, 'Please pardon me. I am old. My bones are hard. They might have hurt your tender foot.'

Then the Guru left that place. Early next morning he left Goindwal. He did not let anybody know where he was going. He went to his home-village, Basarke. There he shut himself in a room outside the village. On the door he wrote the following order, 'Whoever opens the door is no Sikh of mine, nor I am his Guru.' Thus did the Guru hide himself from all.

Sri Datu sat on the Guru's throne at Goindwal. 'I am now the Guru,' he said to himself. He became very proud. But the Sikhs did not go near him. They would not even look at him. After a few days, Sri Datu decided to go back to Khadur Sahib. He gathered all the wealth that he found in the Guru's place. He loaded it on a camel and started towards his home. On the way robbers fell upon

him. They took away the camel with its load. One of them struck Sri Datu on one foot. It was the same with which he had struck the Guru. It swelled up and caused him great pain. The pain did not leave him till the end of his life.

The Sikhs did not know where the Guru had gone and hid himself. Some looked for him in the forest nearby. Others looked for him near the banks of the Beas. They all failed to find him. At last they requested Baba Budha to find out the Guru. He thought out a plan. He and the Sikhs bowed towards the Guru's vacant seat. Then they prayed for the success of their plan. After that the Guru's mare was let loose. The Sikhs followed her at a short distance.

The mare went straight to the Guru's room outside Basarke and stood before its door. The Sikhs were glad. They felt sure that the Guru was in that room. But then they read his order written on the

door. This made them sad. Baba Budha came to their help again. He said, 'We dare not disobey the Guru. We must not open the door. But all the same, some one has to go into the room and bring out the Guru. I will do that.' Saying this he made a hole in the back-wall of the room. He entered the room through that hole. He begged the Guru to show himself to his Sikhs. The Guru agreed. He went with them to Goindwal.

## **Gangu Shah**

There was a merchant named Ganga Das. He was generally called Gangu. He lived and did business in Lahore. He fell on evil days. He suffered loss after loss in his trade. He became extremely poor. When he was rich he had many friends. When he became poor, all friends and relatives left him. They even laughed at him.

Gangu decided to leave Lahore and go somewhere else. He had heard a good deal about Guru Amar Das and his greatness. He made up his mind to see him. Accordingly, he started towards Goindwal. Reaching there, he tried to see the Guru. He was told, 'Every person wishing to see the Guru, must first take food from his free kitchen. That is the rule.' Gangu agreed to follow that rule. He went to the kitchen. He saw people of all castes,

Hindus and Muhammedans, sitting side by side and taking food. He was a high-caste *Khatri*. He had his pride of caste. He hesitated at first to sit and dine with the low-castes. Then he thought, 'I must see the Guru. He will help me. I must give up my pride of caste. I must take food from his kitchen.'

Accordingly, he took food from the Guru's kitchen. He was then permitted to see the Guru. He fell at the Guru's feet and said, 'I am very unfortunate. I have lost everything. But I have found you. I have come to seek your protection, O Shelter of the shelterless ! Help me, save me.'

The Guru said to him, 'Go to Delhi and start your business there. Luck will favour you. You will become wealthy again. But be careful. Don't let wealth turn your head. Always remember God. Help those who need your help. Serve and respect the holy men who visit you.

Remember one thing. Those who forget God become unhappy in the end.'

Gangu agreed to live and act as advised by the Guru. He then touched the Guru's feet and went away. He went to Delhi. He started business there. As the Guru had said, luck favoured him. He became wealthy again in no time.

After some time, a poor needy Brahmin of Delhi came to the Guru. He bowed before him and said, 'True King, I have a daughter. She is of age to be married. But I am poor. I cannot meet the expenses of the marriage. Kindly help me.'

The Guru felt that the Brahmin was really in need. He decided to help him. He gave the Brahmin a letter addressed to Gangu. In it he wrote, 'Give this poor needy Brahmin what he needs.' The Brahmin went to Delhi, met Gangu, gave him the Guru's letter and told him what he needed.

But wealth had turned Gangu's head.

His love for money had become stronger than his love for the Guru. He said to himself, 'I have earned my wealth with my hard work. If I give money to this man, the Guru will send more persons for similar help. If I refuse to help this man, the Guru will not send anyone again.'

Thinking thus, he refused to help the poor needy Brahmin. The latter felt very sad. He returned to the Guru and told him what had happened. The Guru gave him the needed money from his own pocket. The Brahmin went away full of joy, and performed his daughter's marriage.

After some time Gangu's luck turned against him. He began to suffer loss after loss. He became poor once again. He said to himself, 'I disobeyed the Guru. This bad luck has come to me for that reason. I must go to him, and beg forgiveness.'

So he went to Goindwal. But he did not have the courage to meet the Guru. He began to serve in the kitchen. He

worked very hard. All the time, he kept repeating God's name, and reciting the Guru's hymns.

After some time, the Guru sent for him. He fell at the Guru's feet, and begged forgiveness. The Guru granted it to him. Then he gave him a white dress and said, 'Gangu Shah, you are now a true Sikh. Go and live according to the rules of the Sikh faith. Make others do the same. You will be happy. Your name will live in the world.'

Gangu Shah bowed and took leave of the Guru. He spent the rest of his life in living and acting as advised by the Guru. He began to practise the golden rules of religion preached by the Gurus. He earned his living with honest hard-work. He shared his earnings with the needy. He ever repeated God's name or recited the Guru's hymns. He made others live the same life. He treated everybody with kindness, love and sympathy. He was

everybody's friend and helper. This gave him happiness and peace ; for happiness and peace ever await on him who loves God and lovefully serves His children.

## Akbar and the Guru's Langar

We have already read that Babar came to India from Kabul. He had a large army with him. He wanted to become emperor of India. He met Guru Nanak at Eminabad. Accepting the Guru's advice, he set free all his prisoners. He then requested Guru Nanak to pray for his success. The Guru said to him, 'I shall pray for your success. You will get success. But you must promise to be a just and kind ruler. You must give up all bad habits like gambling and drinking wine. You should be just and kind to all your subjects.' Babar promised to live and act as advised by the Guru.

Later, Babar's son, Humayun, met Guru Angad Dev at Khadur Sahib. He had been driven from his throne by Sher Shah Suri. He wanted to get back the throne. He begged the Guru to pray for his success. The Guru agreed to do so. At the same time he advised him to be

a good and pious man and a just and kind ruler.

After Humayun's death, his son, Akbar, became the Emperor of India. He was a just, good and kind ruler. He respected all holy men. He knew that his grandfather had met Guru Nanak. He also knew that his father had met Guru Angad Dev. He knew that the Gurus had agreed to pray for them. He made up his mind to see and pay respects to Guru Amar Das.

Akbar used to visit Lahore, now and then. He decided to see the Guru during one of these visits. Having crossed the Beas, he went to Goindwal. He had with him a large number of Mughal and Pathan soldiers. He took with him costly offerings of various kinds. On reaching Goindwal, he wanted to go into the Guru's presence. But he was told, 'Any-one wishing to see the Guru must first take food from his free kitchen for all. If

you want to see him, you will have to do the same. Nobody is allowed to break this rule.'

We know what the practice was in the Guru's kitchen. People of all castes and religions had to sit side by side on the floor and take their food. There was no special place for the rich or the high. The rich and the poor, kings and beggars, Hindus and Muslims, masters and servants, high and low, Brahmins and Shudras, all were treated alike. All had to take the same food, sitting side by side. No special dishes were prepared for anyone, not even for the Guru. As a matter of fact, the food served to the Guru was far simpler than that served to the public.

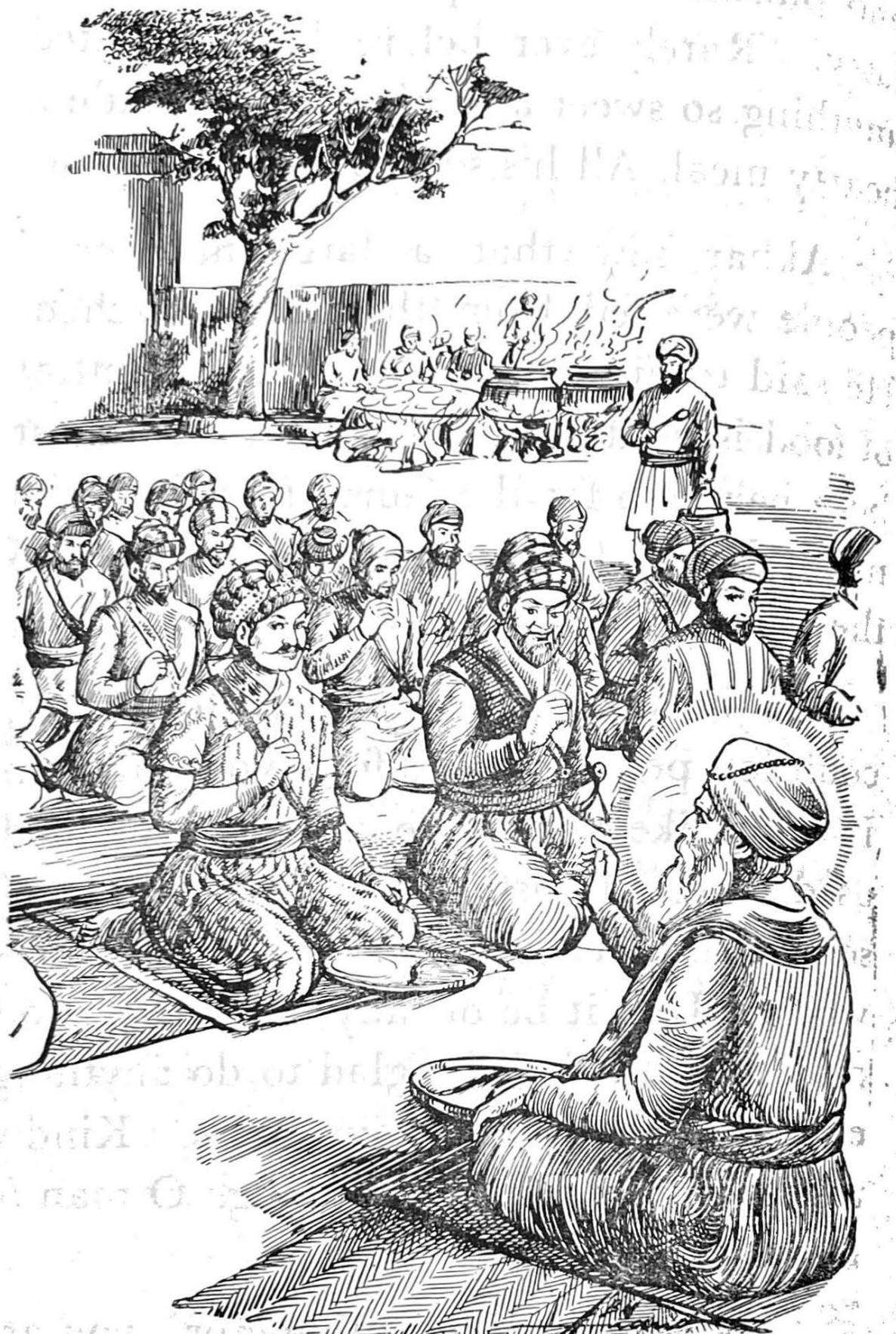
Akbar knew all this. But he was eager to see the Guru. So he went to the Guru's kitchen. He took his seat on the floor like all others. He took the same food as was taken by all others. The food that day consisted of coarse bread, rice

and pulses. The Emperor found it very tasty. Rarely ever before had he tasted anything so sweet and nice. He made a hearty meal. All his soldiers did the same.

Akbar saw that a large number of people were fed from the Guru's kitchen. He said to himself, 'A very large quantity of food is used here every day. It must be a hard job for the Guru to provide so much food. I should give some help to the Guru in this noble work.'

So he said to the Guru, 'Holy sir, countless people are fed from your kitchen. I would like to provide a part of the food used here. I wish to give you a grant of some good, fertile land. Choose it anywhere. Let it be of any size that you may like. I shall be glad to do anything else also that you may desire. Kindly accept my service and offering, O man of God.'

The Guru replied, 'Emperor, you are very good and kind. Your intentions are



*Akbar at the court of Guru Amar Das*

noble and high. But I am unable to accept your offer. God has given me everything in plenty. My Sikhs supply whatever is needed. They set apart a part of their honest earnings for this purpose. I wish that this practice should continue for all times. The Guru's *langar* must be supported and run by the Sikhs.'

The Emperor then said, 'I see that you desire nothing for yourself. Still I want to do something for you. I need your blessings. I wished to give you a grant of some villages. You refuse to accept it. I shall grant them to your daughter Bibi Bhani. She is like a daughter to me.'

The Emperor then signed a grant of the villages in Bibi Bhani's name. The Guru gave the Emperor a *saropa* or dress of honour. The Emperor went away highly pleased. Baba Budha was appointed to manage the villages granted by the Emperor. The produce from the said villages was all used for the good of the people.

## Sri Jetha and Bibi Bhani

In the part of Lahore called Chuna Mandi, there lived a *khatri* named Hari Das, and his wife named Daya Kaur. They were deeply religious. They did not worship gods and goddesses. They worshipped only one God. For a long time after their marriage, no son or daughter was born to them. They wanted very much to have a son. So they always prayed to God for one. After twelve years of married life a son was born to them. He was their first-born child. They named him Ram Das. But usually they called him Jetha. The word *jetha* means 'first-born.'

Sri Jetha was yet a child when his parents died. He was thus left an orphan. His maternal grandmother took him with her to her home in Basarke. There he began to earn a living by selling boiled, salted and spiced grams. Sometimes he

met beggars and holy men. They needed food. Being very kind-hearted, he gave them his grams free, in the name of God.

When Sri Jetha grew young, he went to Goindwal in the company of some Sikhs. On arriving there, he fell at the Guru's feet. 'O True Guru', he said, 'make me your servant and Sikh.' Guru Amar Das was much pleased with Sri Jetha. He said to him, 'Continue to work as you do now. When you are free, serve in the *langar*. You will get a high reward.'

Sri Jetha became at once busy in the Guru's service. He cooked in the Guru's *langar*, he drew water, and brought firewood from the forest. At the same time, he continued to earn his living by selling grams. But he earned only as much as he required for his needs. After that he became busy in serving in the Guru's *langar*, or free kitchen.

Guru Amar Das had two daughters. The elder was called Bibi Dani. She was

married to Sri Rama. The younger daughter was named Bibi Bhani. She was deeply religious. She spent most of her time in repeating God's name or reciting the Gurus' hymns. She was yet unmarried.

One day, it so happened that Sri Jetha was sitting near the door of the Guru's house. He was selling his boiled, salted and spiced grams. Guru Amar Das's wife, Mata Ram Kaur, said to the Guru, 'Bibi Bhani is now of the age to be married. We should search for a husband for her.' The Guru ordered one of his men to make the necessary search.

The man was about to go. Just then Bibi Bhani's mother saw Sri Jetha at the door. She said to the man, 'Search for a youth like that one there, to be my daughter's husband.' Hearing this, the Guru said, 'He alone is like him. None other can be like him. No further search need be made. That youth will be our son-in-law.'

Sri Jetha was called in. He fell at the Guru's feet. Then he touched Mata Ram Kaur's feet. Then folding his hands, he said, 'O True Guru, what are your orders for me?' The Guru told him of his decision. Sri Jetha bowed his head. He was betrothed to Bibi Bhani. After some time the two were married. He began to live with the Guru. The Guru began to call him Sri Ram Das.

Sri Jetha or Sri Ram Das continued to do his work and service in the *langar* as before. He had no pride. In India, sons-in-law get much respect and regard at the homes of their fathers-in-law. They do not work. They rest on soft, clean beds. They get rich and tasty food. But Sri Ram Das was not a son-in-law of that type. He did not behave like the Guru's son-in-law. He thought himself to be the Guru's servant and Sikh. He regarded his father-in-law as his master and Guru. He continued to work and serve like a labourer.

After a time, the Guru began to construct a *bawli*, a well with steps leading to the level of the water. Sri Ram Das began to labour at the *bawli*. He kept ever busy in carrying baskets of earth on his head. The earth soiled his clothes and covered his body. But he did not mind this. Some people laughed at him, saying, 'There goes a grand son-in-law, working as a coolie in his father-in-law's house !' But he paid no heed to their words. He kept himself busy in doing work and service for the Guru.

## Sri Rama or Sri Ram Das ?

Guru Amar Das had two daughters. The elder, Bibi Dani, was married to Sri Rama. The younger, Bibi Bhani, was married to Sri Ram Das. The two sons-in law of the Guru lived at Goindwal. Both were zealous Sikhs. Both did their best to please the Guru with their work and service.

Some Sikhs began to ask one another, 'Which of the two is dearer to the Guru ? Whom does he consider to be better—Sri Rama or Sri Ram Das ?'

The Guru understood what was passing in the Sikhs' minds. He decided to test the two publicly. The Sikhs would then see for themselves which of the two was better.

One day he came to the place where the *bawli* was being made. He said to Sri

Rama, 'Make here a platform for me to sit on and watch the work.' He then explained what the shape and size of the platform should be. Then going to another place, he said the same thing to Sri Ram Das.

Both began to build the platforms. When they were completed, the Guru came to see them. Sri Rama showed his work to the Guru and said, 'I have made it exactly as you ordered. I am sure you will like it.' But the Guru shook his head and said, 'No, it is not well-made. Pull it down and make it again.' Sri Rama said in reply, 'But holy sir, I have made it exactly according to your orders. It is well-built and beautiful.' The Guru, however, said again, 'No. It is not to my satisfaction.' Sri Rama agreed to do as desired. But he did so unwillingly and half-heartedly. He thought that the Guru was wrong.

Then the Guru went to see Sri Ram Das's platform. After seeing it he said,

'I don't like it. Pull it down and build another in its place.' Sri Ram Das bowed and made no reply. He at once began to pull down the platform and to build another in its place.

Both built the platforms again. When they were completed, the Guru came to see them. He again said to each, 'I am not satisfied with your work. Pull down the platform, and build another with greater care.'

Sri Rama said, 'I cannot see what is wrong with my platform. It is exactly like what you desired.' But the Guru was firm. He said; 'Pull it down and build another.' Sri Rama felt a little displeased. But he agreed to do as desired.

On the other hand, Sri Ram Das bowed and said, 'I am sorry for my failure to understand and carry out your orders properly. I shall try again.' He began to do the work again with care and zeal.

When the platforms were completed

again, the Guru went to see them. He again said that they were not to his satisfaction. He again gave the same order—‘Pull them down and build them again with greater care.’

Upon this Sri Rama said, ‘I have done my best. I can do no better.’ He refused to build the platform a fourth time. He said to himself, ‘The Guru has become old. He says one thing today. He forgets it the next day, and says something else. It is impossible to satisfy him.’

But Sri Ram Das accepted the Guru’s orders most cheerfully. He pulled down the platform at once. He built another in its place. The Guru was not satisfied even with that. Sri Ram Das pulled it down and built another. In this way he pulled down and rebuilt the platform as many as seven times. But the Guru was still not satisfied. Sri Ram Das fell at the Guru’s feet and said, ‘I am a fool. I fail to understand your orders properly. Let

me try again, perhaps I may succeed.'

The Guru embraced him and said, 'You have come out successful in the tests.' Then he said to his Sikhs, 'You have seen which of the two is better. Ram Das is the perfect being. He is in every way fit to take my place.'

Soon afterwards, the Guru one day, caused Sri Ram Das to bathe and put on a new dress. He called his two sons and his principal Sikhs. He said to them, 'Guru Nanak made the rule that the Guruship should go to the best person. I have found Sri Ram Das to be most worthy. I now bestow the Guruship on him.'

The Guru got down from his throne. Taking Sri Ram Das's arm, he seated him on it. Bhai Budha put the *tilak* of Guruship on Sri Ram Das's forehead. Guru Amar Das placed a coconut and five *paise* before him and bowed to him. He ordered his sons and Sikhs to do the same. Thus did Jetha or Sri Ram Das become Guru Ram Das, the fourth Guru of the Sikhs.

## Sweet Humility Always Wins

As you know, Guru Nanak had two sons. The elder son's name was Baba Sri Chand. He was a deeply religious man. He hoped that after his father he would become the Guru. But Guru Nanak had not found him worthy of taking his place. Hence he had chosen Guru Angad to be the Guru after him. Baba Sri Chand had felt displeased at this. He felt that injustice had been done to him. He said, 'A servant has been given what was mine by right.'

Consequently, he was angry with those who occupied his father's place. He had kept away from Guru Angad. He had never visited Guru Amar Das. But by now, his anger had cooled down. So he made up his mind to see Guru Ram Das.

Baba Sri Chand was a very holy man. He was a great saint. He spent most of his time in worshipping God. He had not

married. He remained a bachelor throughout his life. He was not a householder like his father. As we know, all Gurus were householders. He was *Udasi*—one who had given up worldly life. He had a large following. His followers were called *Udasis* or *Udasi* Sikhs.

Having decided to see Guru Ram Das, Baba Sri Chand set out for Goindwal. The Guru learnt that Baba Sri Chand was on his way to see him. He said to himself, 'Baba Sri Chand is Guru Nanak's son. He is a great saint. He is senior to me in age. For all these reasons, he is worthy of deep respect. I should treat him most respectfully.'

Thinking thus, the Guru went out to receive and welcome the holy visitor. He made him an offering of a strong, beautiful horse and five hundred rupees in cash. Baba Sri Chand accepted the offering with pleasure.

On seeing Guru Ram Das, Baba Sri

Chand said to himself, 'He looks exactly like my father. He is the very image of Guru Nanak.'

On reaching Goindwal, the Guru and his holy guest began to talk with each other. Now Guru Ram Das differed altogether from Baba Sri Chand in appearance. He had uncut hair on the head. He had a very long beard. All Sikh Gurus and their Sikhs used to let their hair and beards grow uncut. All true Sikhs do the same now, too. But Baba Sri Chand used to shave off his hair and beard. He was clean-shaven. All his followers do the same to this day. They have clean-shaven heads and chins.

On seeing the Guru's long beard, Baba Sri Chand said, 'You have grown a very long beard. What is it for ?' With sweet humility, the Guru replied, 'O Holy Sir, I have grown a long beard in order to wipe with it the feet of holy men like you.'

Saying this, the Guru began actually



*"O Holy Sir, I have grown a long beard to  
wipe with it the feet of holy men like you."*

to wipe Baba Sri Chand's feet with his long black beard. Baba Sri Chand became a bit uneasy. He drew back his feet from the Guru, and said, 'O True King, you are in my father's place. You are, therefore, senior to me. I should show respect to you, and not you to me. It is because of your such sweetness and humility, that you have taken my father's place. I do not possess these good qualities. That is why I was not chosen to be the Guru. You are very great, indeed. You are, in every way, fit to occupy my father's throne of Guruship. I admire you. I bow to you.'

Indeed, sweetness and humility are very noble qualities. To treat everyone with love and sweetness, to be free from pride of every sort, to serve all with a heart full of love and kindness—these are great qualities. Every Sikh, every good man, should possess them. He should use them in his daily life. He will win everybody's heart. Sweet humility wins the heart.

## A Childless Couple's Prayer

In a certain village there lived a man named Adam. He had no child. He and his wife served and worshipped many *sadhus* and *fakirs*. They made offerings at many places of worship. But no child was born to them. This made them sad. They were getting old. They began to fear that they might never get a son or daughter. They did not like to die childless. But what could they do !

Once they met a Sikh. On hearing their story, he said to them, 'Go to Guru Ram Das. He occupies Guru Nanak's throne. He will pray for you. His prayers are always accepted by God. Your wishes will be fulfilled.'

At that time Guru Ram Das lived at *Guru ka Chak*. That place was later called Amritsar. Accepting the Sikh's advice, the childless couple went to *Guru ka Chak*.

They began to live there. Adam became busy in work, service, and prayer. He attended the Guru's court every morning and evening. There he listened to the hymns sung by the Sikhs. He read and learnt *Gurbani* or the Gurus' hymns.

He kept repeating the name of God. During the day he went into the nearby forest. He brought two loads of firewood from there. One of them he kept in his house. He took the other load to the Guru's *langar* or free kitchen.

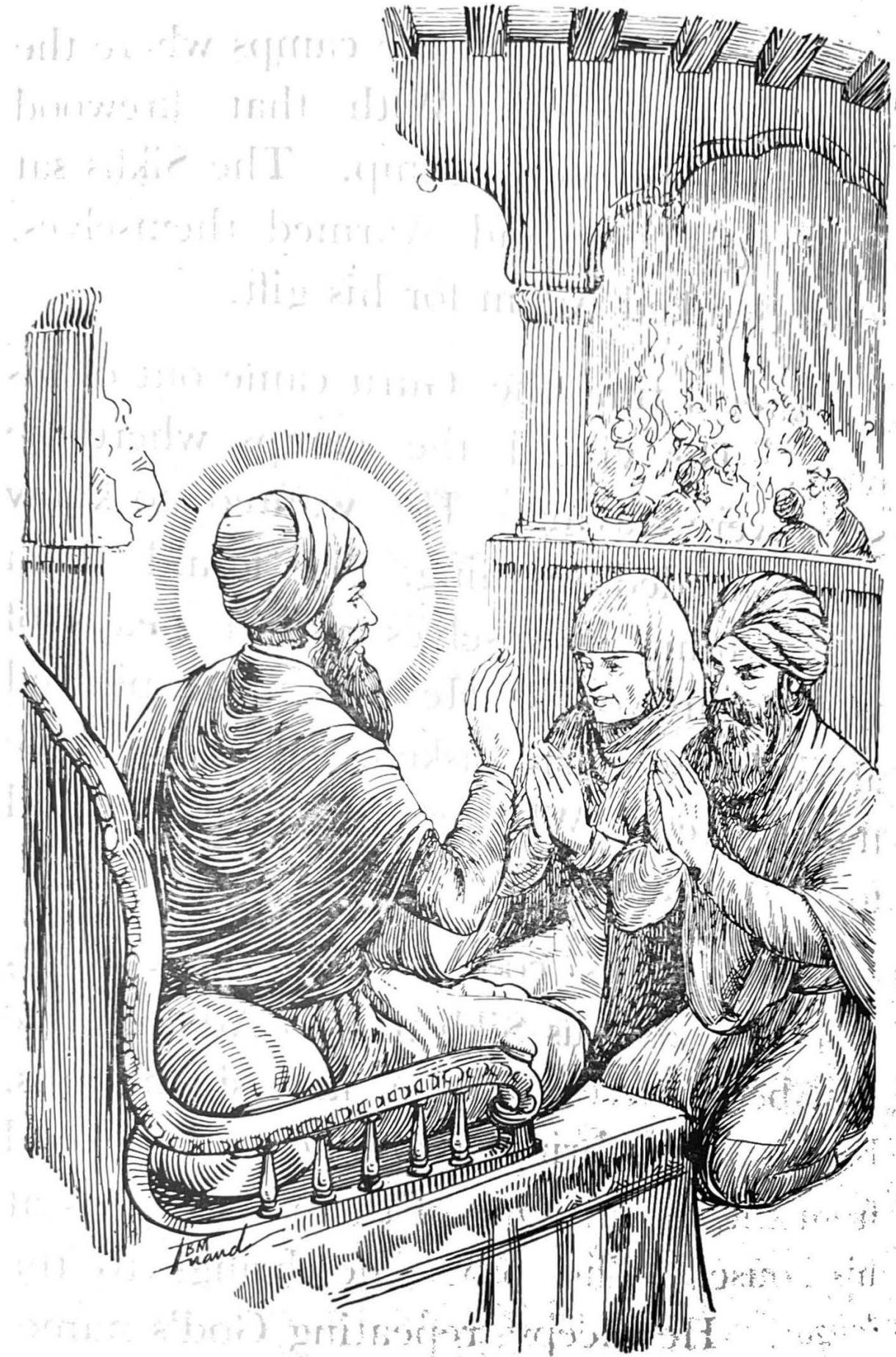
Six months passed in this way. Once the Guru went away to a certain place. When he returned, a large number of Sikhs came with him. Quite a large number of Sikhs had arrived during his absence. It was mid-winter then. The days were very cold. The nights were colder still. The visiting Sikhs shivered with cold.

Adam saw them suffering thus. He made up his mind to help them. He had a stock of dry firewood at home. He took

bundles of it to all the camps where the Sikhs were staying. With that firewood fire was lit in every camp. The Sikhs sat round the fire and warmed themselves. They thanked Adam for his gift.

After a time the Guru came out of his place. He visited the camps where the Sikhs were staying. He wanted to know if they needed anything. He found them all warming themselves round heaps of burning firewood. He was much pleased at the sight. He asked, 'Who has done this service ? Who has provided firewood to all the camps ?'

The Guru's cook said, 'O True King, there is a zealous Sikh named Adam. He has been here for the last six months. Every day he brings two loads of firewood from the forest. One of them he keeps at his house. The other he brings to the *langar*. He keeps repeating God's name. He does not take food from the *langar*. He sells some of the firewood. He lives



"I will pray for you. You will get a son."

—H. Bokashin (10-year-old)

on the money earned by the sale. Today he saw the Sikhs shivering with cold. He brought out firewood from his house. He gave some of it to each camp. Thus he provided warm comfort to your Sikhs.'

The Guru was mightily pleased to hear this. He sent for Adam. Adam came, bowed, and stood with folded hands. The Guru said to him, 'I am mightily pleased with you. Ask for any boon you like. It will be granted.'

Adam had a deep desire for a son. But he was an old man. He felt shy of asking for such a gift. He lowered his eyes and said nothing. The Guru again asked him to say what he wanted to have. Adam said, 'O True King, having seen you, I have obtained everything.'

On going home, Adam told the whole story to his wife. She said, 'You made a great mistake. You should not have felt shy. You should have begged for a son.' The next day, they both went to the Guru's

court. The Guru understood what was passing in their minds. He said to them, 'Don't be shy. Speak out what you wish to have.' Adam still felt unable to speak. His wife folded her hands and said, 'O True King, grant us the boon of a son.'

The Guru said, 'God is great and merciful. He answers His servants' prayers. I will pray for you. You should also pray to Him. You will get a son. Name him Bhagtu. He will be a great *bhagat* or worshipper of God. He will earn a good name. He will make you happy.'

Adam and his wife were greatly pleased. They continued to lead a life of work, service, and worship. They also ever prayed to God to bless them with a son. They had full faith that God would accept their prayers. And he actually did so. In due course, they were blessed with a son. They were extremely happy. They thanked God and the Guru. All of us should thank God and the Guru for all their gifts to us. Adam and his wife named their son Bhagtu.

## **Falsehood Fails, Truth Succeeds**

Guru Ram Das felt that the time of departure from the world was coming near. So, it was the time for him to decide who was to take his place after him. He carried out a number of tests. He found that his youngest son, Sri Arjan, alone was fit for the Guruship. He made his decision known to his Sikhs. They agreed with him. Then he called together his principal Sikhs. He sent for five paise and a coconut. He came down from his throne. He seated Sri Arjan on it in the presence of the assembled Sikhs. He placed the coconut and the five paise before him. He ordered Baba Budha to put the *tilak* or mark of Guruship on Sri Arjan's forehead. He then bowed before Sri Arjan and said, 'Sri Arjan is the Guru now. As one lamp is lighted from another, so has the Guru's light or spirit passed onto him. Thus Guru Nanak's light and spirit

have come to dwell in him. He is the fifth Guru Nanak.'

Prithia was the eldest son of Guru Ram Das. He thought that it was his right to become the Guru after his father. But his father had given the Guruship to Sri Arjan. Prithia became mad with anger.

He quarrelled with his father. He spoke to him in harsh, angry words. He said to Guru Ram Das, 'The Guruship was my right. You have given it to my youngest brother. I will remove him and seat myself on the Guru's throne.'

Guru Ram Das advised Prithia that it was improper for a son to quarrel with his father. He desired him to accept his decision dutifully, like a good son. But Prithia continued to speak in harsh language to his father. He said again and again, 'You have done me a great wrong. I will undo what you have done. I will drive him away. I will become the Guru in his place. I don't accept

your unjust decision.'

On the following day, Guru Ram Das set out for Goindwal. He took Guru Arjan with him. There he bade farewell to his dear ones and departed from this world.

Soon after that Guru Arjan returned to *Guru ka Chak* or Amritsar. There he began to carry out his duties as the fifth Guru of the Sikhs.

Prithia declared himself to be the Guru. He sent out his men to make it known that he was the Guru. Many Sikhs were deceived by his men. When the Sikhs came to Amritsar with their offerings, Prithia's men took them to him. Thus all offerings went to Prithia. Guru Arjan was left with no income. Still he managed to run the Guru's kitchen with what he had with him. He remained calm and busy in repeating God's name. He took no steps against Prithia. He had full faith in God. He believed that Truth

would succeed and falsehood would fail.

Prithia played another trick. While he took the offerings from the visiting Sikhs, he sent them on to the Guru's *langar* for food. The Guru did not mind this. He provided the best possible food for all in the *langar*. But it was not as good as it used to be in former days. He and his wife had often to live on nothing but parched grams. Sometimes they had to be content with a little coarse food, only once a day. But they were happy and at peace, all the time.

This went on for some time. Then Bhai Gurdas came from Agra. He was a cousin of Bibi Bhani, Guru Arjan Dev's mother. He was a zealous and learned Sikh. He was pained to see what was happening. He was sad to see the poor quality of food served in the Guru's *langar*. He was pained still more to see the very poor quality of the food taken by the Guru and his wife.

He made up his mind to set things right. He called together some principal Sikhs like Baba Budha. He discussed the matter with them. Baba Budha took his position at a place called Pipli Sahib. He met the visiting Sikhs there. He told them about the tricks being played by Prithia. He received their offerings for the Guru. These offerings he sent to the Guru. The Guru's *langar* became well-provided. Other prominent Sikhs went out in all directions. They informed the Sikhs of all places of what was happening at Amritsar. Soon the truth became known far and wide. All Sikhs accepted Guru Arjan as their true Guru. They sent him their offerings, or brought them to him when they came to see him. Prithia's plans were defeated. Falsehood failed and Truth prevailed.

## A Lesson in Humility

Guru Arjan had become more than thirty years of age. So far no child had been born to him. His brother Prithia had a son named Miharban. The Guru treated his nephew, Miharban, as his own son. Prithia and his wife used to tell each other, 'The Guru has no son. After his death, the Guruship will come to our son.' One day, his wife said to the Guru's wife, 'What if your husband has unjustly taken possession of the Guru's throne? You have no son. The Guruship will, after all, come to my son and my family.'

The Guru's wife, Mata Ganga, was much pained at these words. She repeated them to the Guru and said, 'My Lord, you grant people all their wishes. Grant one wish of mine. Grant me a son.'

The Guru decided to use this chance to give his Sikhs a lesson in humility.

He, no doubt, possessed the power to grant her the desired gift. But he decided to ask her to go to Baba Budha and pray to him for that gift. So he said to her, 'God accepts the prayers of His dear ones. I would advise you to go to Baba Budha. He is a true and perfect Sikh of Guru Nanak's time. He possesses great powers. His prayers can never fail to be accepted. If he be pleased to bless you, your wish will be fulfilled. He lives in the forest. He looks after the Guru's cattle there. He is a humble man. He is ever engaged in worship. He takes only one meal a day. He eats what is sent to him from the Guru's *langar*. If you succeed in pleasing him, He will bless you, and you will have a son.'

Mata Ganga ordered her cooks to prepare tasty dishes. She took a maid-servant with her to carry the food. She put on rich fine clothes. Sitting in a chariot, she reached near the forest where

Baba Budha used to live and work. The running chariot raised much dust in the air. Baba Budha saw the rising dust. He asked, 'What is that ? Who is coming ?' A Sikh replied, 'It is the Guru's wife coming this way.' Baba Budha said, 'What misfortune has made her thus fly from her home ?'

Mata Ganga soon reached his presence. She placed the tasty dishes before him. He took some food, but was not much pleased. The maid-servant explained to him what for the Guru's wife had come. Baba Budha said, 'Who am I to grant such gifts ? I am only the grass-cutter and servant of the Guru. If I had such powers why should I cut grass and sweep the Guru's stables ?'

Mata Ganga grew sad on hearing Baba Budha's reply. She returned to Amritsar, lost in grief. She told the whole story to the Guru. He said, 'The holy saints should be served with humility



*'It is the Guru's wife coming this way.'*

and respect. You made a show of your position. You went there seated in a chariot. You took for him food prepared by your servants. You took with you a servant to carry the food. In return, you got not a reward but a curse. I tell you how to please him. Grind wheat and grams with your own hands. Knead the flour. Mix in it salt and spices. Then bake the bread yourself. Prepare also butter and buttermilk with your own hands. Put on a simple dress. Then take the bread, butter, thick buttermilk, curd, and some onions on your head. Go on foot and alone. While walking, go on repeating God's Name and praying to Him. In that way you will please Babaji and obtain his blessings.'

Mata Ganga did exactly as advised by the Guru. She ground wheat and grams. She kneaded the flour. She mixed in it salt and spices. She baked the bread. She prepared butter and buttermilk. She

selected some good onions. She put on a simple dress. She took all these things on her head. She walked barefoot to the forest where Baba Budha lived. She went alone, repeating God's Name all the time.

Baba Budha saw her coming. He said to himself, 'There comes *Mataji*, dear, respected mother. She has brought me my meal. If a mother were not to care for her son, who else will do so ? I was wrong in sending her away yesterday in that manner. But she has pardoned me.'

He stood up to greet and welcome her. He saluted her with folded hands and a deep bow. He joyfully accepted what she had brought. While eating the salted and spiced wheat-and-gram-flour bread or *missi roti*, he said, 'The Guru is the owner of the Divine storehouse, but I have received an order to open it. As you have given me food to my heart's content, so shall you have a son to your heart's content. He shall be very handsome and brave.

He shall possess great powers of body, mind, and spirit. As I crush the onions here, so shall he crush his enemies' heads.'

Mata Ganga returned home mightily pleased. Baba Budha's promise was fulfilled. Within a year she gave birth to a son. He was named Sri Hargobind.

## Thy Will is Ever Sweet, O Lord !

Once, a Sikh named Bhai Gurmukh came to see Guru Arjan. He sat listening to the hymns being sung in the Guru's court. One of those hymns contained the following lines :

'Thy Will is ever sweet to me, O Lord !

The wealth of Name is all that Nanak begs for from Thee.'

Bhai Gurmukh thought within himself, 'Good luck and bad luck, pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, are all caused by God. Everything happens as willed by Him. Good luck, pleasure, and joy are sweet, no doubt. But bad luck, pain, and sorrow can never be sweet. How can then anybody say that His will is ever sweet to him.'

On meeting the Guru that day, he expressed his doubts to him and said, 'I very much wish to see a Sikh who looks

upon pain and pleasure, sorrow and joy, as equally sweet gifts given by God ; who calmly accepts all that may happen to him. Does such a one really exist ?'

The Guru replied, 'Yes, there are many such true Sikhs alive. I can show you one, not very far away. His name is Bhai Bhikhari. Go and see him.'

Bhai Gurmu<sup>k</sup>h went to Bhai Bhikhari's house. On reaching there, he found a band playing at his door.

Inside he found ladies making merry and singing songs of joy. Girls and boys were dancing about in glee. The songs being sung were *ghories*. So he concluded that a boy's marriage was to take place. On enquiry, he was told that Bhai Bhikhari's only son was about to be married.

He asked someone to let him see Bhai Bhikhari. The man took him to a room at the back of the house. Bhai Bhikhari was there in that room. All the joy and

merry-making going on in the house seemed to be unknown to him. He was calm, neither happy nor sad. He was busy in sewing a white sheet of cloth. As he worked, he went on reciting a hymn of the Guru. It contained the lines.

‘Thy Will is ever sweet to me, O Lord !

The wealth of Name is all that Nanak begs for from Thee.’

Bhai Gurmukh was surprised to see Bhai Bhikhari thus occupied. Going near him, he said, ‘O Sikh of Guru, what I have seen here has filled me with wonder. I cannot understand all this. Please be kind and explain.’

Bhai Bhikhari said, ‘What is it that needs explanation, my brother ?’

Bhai Gurmukh said, ‘Your son is about to be married. It is a happy event. All your people are busy in singing songs and making merry. Why don’t you join them ? How and why is it that you sit here away from all ? And what for are you sewing this white sheet ? You don’t

seem to share the joy felt by all your friends and relatives. I cannot understand all this. This is what I wish you to explain to me.'

Bhai Bhikhari replied, 'My brother, what you say is right. My son's marriage is to take place tomorrow morning. The marriage party is to go today. It will return tomorrow with the bride. But I pass my days in accordance with the Will of the Guru and God. Everything happens according to that Will. I bow to that Will in every case. Pain and sorrow do not make me sad. Pleasure and joy do not make me glad. I have learnt to be calm under all circumstances, good or bad. Who knows what may happen tomorrow ? Today my son is going with his marriage party. Tomorrow he may have to go with his funeral party. I am preparing this shroud or winding-sheet for him. His dead body will be wrapped in it. Who knows when it

may be needed ? It might be needed tomorrow.'

Bhai Gurmukh was filled with still greater wonder on hearing this. The marriage party left that day. It returned with the bride on the following day. The bride and the bridegroom were welcomed with songs of joy.

But soon after his return, the bridegroom began to have severe pain in his body. He died after a few minutes. All began to weep and cry. But Bhai Bhikhari was calm as ever. He shed no tears. He uttered no cry. He felt no sorrow. He quietly brought the white winding-sheet which he had prepared the previous day. His son's dead body was wrapped in that shroud. It was carried to the cremation ground and cremated.

While the rest were weeping and crying, Bhai Bhikhari went on reciting the Guru's hymns.

On return from the cremation ground, Bhai Gurmukh said to Bhai Bhikhari, 'So you knew that your son was to die today, the very day of his marriage. You knew that his wife would become a widow on the very day of her marriage. Why did you get them married ?'

Bhai Bhikhari said, 'All had to happen as willed by Him. How could I interfere ? How could I stop it ?'

Then he closed his eyes and repeated,

'Thy Will is ever sweet to me, O Lord !

The wealth of Name is all that Nanak begs for from Thee '

Bhai Gurmukh bowed to him, touched his feet and returned to the Guru.

## Tarn Taran and Muslim Ranghars

At Jhabal, about fifteen kilometres to the South-west of Amritsar, there lived a zealous Sikh. He was called Baba Langah. Some persons of his family left that village. They settled on their land. They built two small villages near each other. The villages were called Thathi Khera. They are now about five kilometres to the north of Tarn Taran.

Once Guru Arjan was making a tour of the country south of Amritsar. Many Sikhs were with him. Baba Langah was one of them. The Guru and his party stayed for a few days at Thathi Khera. They were guests of Baba Langah and his people.

Now, near the villages there was a large pond of clear, clean water. Shady trees grew near it on all sides. The Guru liked this place very much. He used to

visit it every morning and spend some hours there. One day he said to Baba Langah, 'I have a mind to build a temple and dig a tank in this part of the country. The tank shall be much larger than that at Amritsar. I have been looking for a suitable place for that purpose. I would like to dig the tank and build the temple here. I shall call it Tarn Taran. A town will grow around it. It will be one of the important holy places of my Sikhs. How do you like the idea ?'

Baba Langah folded his hands and said, 'O True Guru, the land here is hardly sufficient for my children living here. The tank, the temple, and the town will use up a large area. My children will be left with insufficient land. But, only a few kilometres from here, there is plenty of open, uncultivated land. A rain-water stream flows through it. The land will be wholly suitable. The rain-water stream will provide water for the tank. The

land in question belongs to Muhammadan Ranghars of Palasaur. I shall buy from them as much land as needed. I shall pay them as much as they demand. I shall then humbly offer it to you. I beg you to accept this plan of mine.'

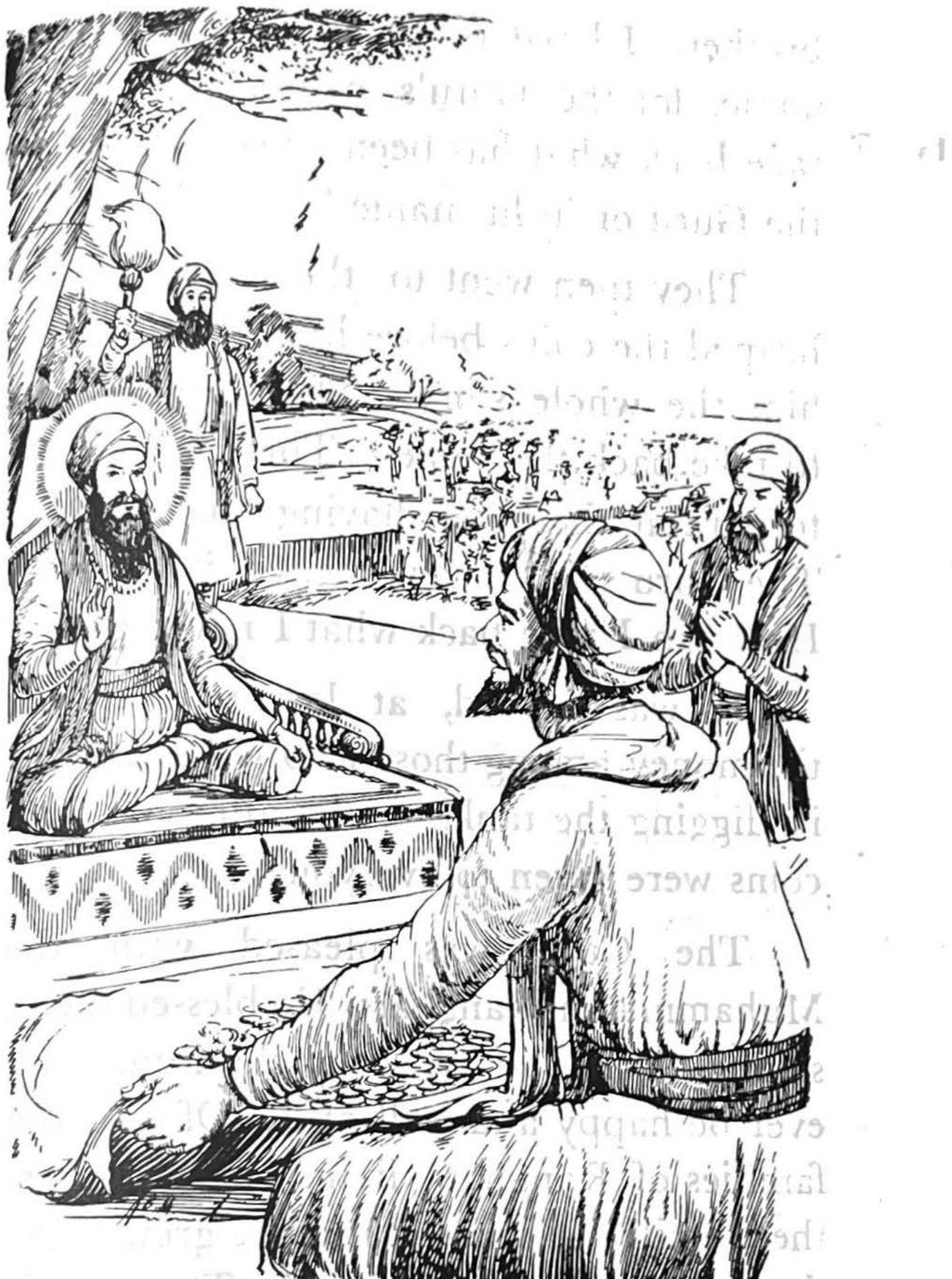
The Guru agreed. He visited the land in Baba Langah's company. He selected a plot. On a fixed day prayers were offered and the work of digging the tank was started. Sikhs from the nearby villages came in large numbers every day to do the digging. They did this work as a labour of love, as a piece of service for their dear Guru.

Baba Langah met the owners of the land. He bought from them eighty bighas of their land. He paid them as much as they asked for it. The price was paid in silver coins. All together, they formed quite a heavy load. The Muhammadan Ranghars took the money to their homes. Their women-folk, on seeing

the heap of silver coins, said, 'From whom have you got all this money ? And what for ?'

'They were told the story of the sale of the land. On hearing this, they said, 'What have you done ? That fakir of Allah requires the land not for his private or family use. He is to use it for public religious purpose. He will build here a house of God, like the one he built at Amritsar. Don't you know that the foundation-stone of that House of God was laid by our Hazrat Mian Mir ? Should we accept money for this piece of land ? No. The land was lying unused. It will be used for a holy purpose. We should consider it a great good luck. Go and return the money. Also beg the Guru's pardon for having accepted it thoughtlessly.'

The Ranghars went back. They met Baba Langah. They wanted him to take back the money. He replied, 'No



*They heaped the coins before him.*

brothers, I have given it in the Guru's name, for the Guru's cause. I cannot take back what has been once offered to the Guru or in his name.'

They then went to the Guru. They heaped the coins before him. They told him the whole story. They begged him to take back the money. They begged him to pardon them for having accepted it. The Guru said, 'I never gave it to you. How can I take back what I never gave ?'

It was agreed, at last, to distribute the money among those who were engaged in digging the tank. A handful of silver coins were given to everyone.

The Guru was pleased with the Muhammadan Ranghars. He blessed them, saying, 'Your family, your children, shall ever be happy and well-off.' Of all the families of Ranghars living in Palasaur, the family of these Ranghars grew to be the most happy and well-off. They continued to have faith in the Guru. They

made regular offerings at the temple at Tarn Taran. They had to leave their village in 1947, to go to Pakistan. They were sad to be cut off from Tarn Taran. Even afterwards, some of them have been visiting the temple and offering prayers there.

## Baba Langah

The work of digging the tank of Tarn Taran was going on at great speed. Hundreds of Sikhs were engaged in this labour of love. Guru Arjan stayed there for the whole day. He watched the work being done. He looked to the needs of those doing that work. Sometimes he joined them and worked with them.

After the day's work was over, the Guru used to go with Baba Langah to Thathi Khera. He passed the night there. The house where he stayed was later changed into a Gurdwara. It is called Manji Sahib.

After some time, a house was built for the Guru near the tank. He began to live there. Baba Langah went every day to his village Jhabal. He got up very early every morning. To get up very early each morning is a rule that every

Sikh has to follow. He took his bath. Then he set out for Tarn Taran. On his head he carried a neat earthen pot. What did the pot contain ? It contained sweet curd and butter. These two things were meant for the Guru. He walked barefoot, repeating God's name and reciting the Guru's hymns. He reached the Guru's presence before sunrise. He offered the curd and butter to the Guru. After that he returned to his village, with the empty earthen pot on his head. Then he took his breakfast. Thereafter he returned to Tarn Taran. He spent the day in the Guru's work and service.

This went on for quite a long time. One day the Guru decided to test Baba Langah. That night he said to his servant, 'Go out early in the morning tomorrow. Standing on some high place, be on the look out for Bhai Langah. When you see him coming, come back quickly and inform me.' To another servant he said,

'Get up early in the morning tomorrow. Feed and water the mare. Then saddle it. Keep it ready for me. I shall require it before sunrise.'

The servants did as directed. One went out to wait for Baba Langah. The other went to prepare the mare for the journey. The first of these two saw Baba Langah coming. He was yet quite far away. He ran to the Guru and informed him that Baba Langah was coming. The Guru took his mare and rode away to Amritsar.

A short time after that Baba Langah arrived. He found that the Guru was not in his house. He searched for him. Then he asked the Guru's servants to tell him where he could see the Guru. He was told that the Guru had left for Amritsar. Baba Langah said, 'All right. Let it be as it pleases him.'

Baba Langah started towards Amritsar. He walked barefoot, repeating God's name

and reciting to Guru's hymns. He had taken no food or drink. He walked as fast as he could.'

On the other hand, the Guru wanted to test him still further. He kept the mare saddled and ready. He said to a Sikh, 'Bhai Langah will be coming. Be on the look out for him. When you see him coming, come and tell me at once.'

In due course Baba Langah reached near the Guru's house at Amritsar. The servant saw him coming. He went in to inform the Guru. The Guru took his mare and rode off to Tarn Taran.

Baba Langah reached the Guru's house. He asked for the Guru. He was told that the Guru had left for Tarn Taran. 'All right,' said Baba Langah. 'Let it be as it pleases him.'

He started back towards Tarn Taran. By the time he reached there, it was past noon already. He entered the Guru's house. The Guru rose to receive him.

He took the pot of curd and butter from Baba Langah's head. Baba Langah fell at the Guru's feet and said, 'Pardon me, O True King. I was a bit late this morning. I should have reached here before your departure. I have kept you waiting too long for this little, humble breakfast.'

The Guru said, 'No, Bhai Langah, you were not late. I wanted to test you. I am glad that you have stood the test so well. Now your service has become complete. Now you need not come here daily. I shall send for you, when I need your service.'

Baba Langah bowed and thanked the Guru. He left for his village. He took his breakfast on reaching home. It was quite late in the afternoon by then.

## **Jahangir and Guru Arjan**

Under Guru Arjan the Sikh religion became very popular. It was making rapid progress. More and more people of all castes were becoming Sikhs. Even a large number of Muhammadans had accepted Guru Arjan as their guide and religious teacher, as their Guru.

The Muhammadan priests—Qazis and Mullahs—did not like this. They wanted that all non-Muslims should become Muslims. But just the opposite was happening under the Guru's guidance. He was standing in their way. He must be stopped. They began to make plans against him.

The first three Mughal Emperors had been kind and just to all their people. They did not work against any religion. Babar, Humayun and Akbar had even made friends with the Sikh Gurus. After

Akbar, his son, Jahangir had sat on the throne. His policy and views were different. He wanted to spread Islam or the Muslim religion.

The Qazis and Mullahs met him. They spoke against the Guru. They urged him to stop the spread of Sikhism. 'If that is not done soon,' said they, 'very few Muslims will be left in the country. The only way to do this is to put an end to Guru Arjan's life.' The Emperor promised to meet their wishes.

It so happened that Jahangir's son Khusrau rose against him. He wanted to become the emperor in place of his own father. He fought against Jahangir. He lost the battle. He ran towards Lahore. Jahangir went after him. He wanted to catch and punish him. He knew that many people had helped the rebel prince. As he went along, he made enquiries to find out such people. He punished as many of them as he could catch.

On his way to Lahore, he passed by Goindwal and Tarn Taran. He made a halt at the former place. All along, he went on making enquiries to find out Khusrau's helpers. He asked people, 'Did anybody help Khusrau ?' He made the enquiry at Goindwal, too. Nobody said a word against the Guru. The Guru had a number of enemies like Chandu, Prithia, Brahmins, and Qazis. If the Guru had helped Khusrau, they would have certainly said so to Jahangir.

Jahangir reached Lahore. After some time he got ready to return to Delhi. The enemies of Guru Arjan decided to act. They made up a false story against him. They met Jahangir. They said to him, 'Khusrau met Guru Arjan at Goindwal. He asked for help from the Guru. The Guru prayed for his success against Your Majesty. He also gave him a large sum of money.'

On hearing this, Jahangir became red

with anger. He had already made up his mind to put an end to Guru Arjan's life. He had made that resolve on account of what the Qazis and Mullahs had told him. Now he had been given another excuse against the Guru. He had helped the Emperor's rebel son. He must be punished for having worked against the Emperor.

Jahangir did not make any enquiry. He did not try to find out the truth. He had no time to do so. He had no mind to do so. He forgot one most important fact. Otherwise, he would not have believed the Guru's enemies. That fact was this. No such report had been made to him at Goindwal or at any other place. He had made enquiries at every place.

But Jahangir wanted only some excuse against the Guru. He remembered the promise that he had given to the Qazis to put an end to the Guru's life and activities. He was glad that he had got an excuse to fulfil that promise.

He acted at once. He said to his men, 'Go to Amritsar, arrest the Guru, and bring him here to me.' Then he said to his officers, 'When the Guru is brought here, put him to death with tortures.'

He gave these orders and left for Delhi. His men went to Amritsar, arrested Guru Arjan Dev, took him to Lahore, and handed him over to the Emperor's officers there.

## Tortures

Jahangir's officers at Lahore were to carry out his orders regarding Guru Arjan. They began to make plans for the tortures to be given to the Guru. Chandu, an enemy of the Guru, was one of those officers. He said to them, 'I shall carry out the Emperor's orders. I have made my plans. Give the Guru into my hands. I shall kill him with tortures.'

The officers agreed at once. Chandu took the Guru to his palace in Lahore. There he said to the Guru, 'You know what you have done against me. Now I am going to take my revenge. Be ready.'

The Guru replied, 'I bear no enmity or ill-will against any one. All happens as God Almighty wills it to happen. I am prepared to accept His Will. You may do what you like.'

Chandu began to torture the Guru. On the first day, the Guru was not given anything to eat or drink. He was not allowed to sleep at night. He was kept awake. He bore all this most calmly. He kept thinking of God, repeating His Name, and reciting Holy Hymns.

On the following day, Chandu made the Guru sit in a big copper vessel. He filled the vessel with water. He ordered his men to light fire under the copper vessel.

The water began to get heated. After a time, the water began to boil. It burnt the Guru's body. But the Guru sat calm and quite. He felt no pain. He gave out no cry. He did not even sigh. He felt no anger against those who were torturing him. He went on praying to God. He prayed for strength to bear everything with calmness and courage. He went on repeating His name. He went on repeating, 'All is happening, O Lord, according to Thy Will. Thy Will



*Thy will is ever sweet to me.* John 13:1

is ever sweet to me.'

The boiling water made the Guru's flesh soft and painful. Blisters appeared all over his body.

On the third day, Chandu ordered his men, 'Make some sand red hot in iron pans. Seat the Guru in boiling water. Then pour the red-hot burning sand on his head and body.' This was done. The water boiled his flesh from below. The burning red-hot sand burned his head and body from above. The persons engaged in torturing him were wet with sweat. They felt most uncomfortable because of the heat. It was the hottest summer month. But the Guru kept calm and quiet. He felt no pain. He uttered no cry. He did not sigh. He felt no anger against those who tortured him. He kept thinking of God. He kept repeating His Name. He kept repeating, 'Thy Will to me is ever sweet, O Lord !'

Hazrat Mian Mir was a great Muslim

saint of Lahore. He was the friend of the Guru. He was greatly respected by all Muslims. Even Emperor Jahangir had great respect for him. Hazrat Mian Mir heard of what was happening to Guru Arjan. He was very sad at the news. He went to see the Guru. On seeing the Guru being tortured, Hazrat Mian Mir cried out in grief and pain. He said to the Guru, 'May I appeal to the Emperor for your release? May I ask him to punish these people who are torturing you ?'

The Guru said, 'No brother. All is happening in accordance with God's Will. Men who stand for Truth have often to suffer. Their sufferings give strength to the cause of Truth. Go, brother. Pray for me. Pray for the success of my cause. Pray for victory to Truth.'

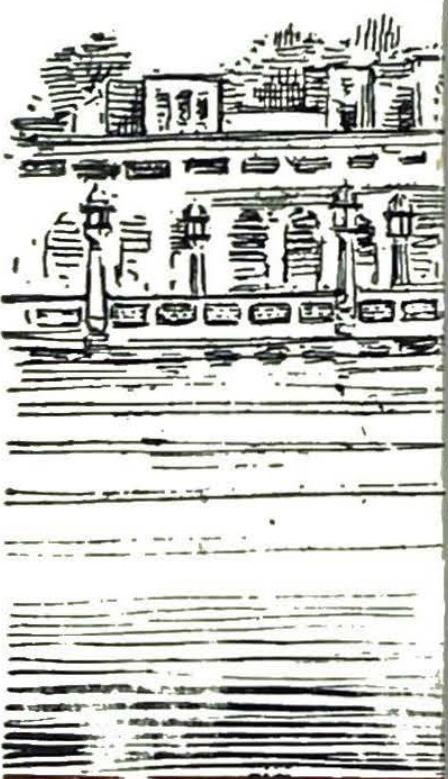
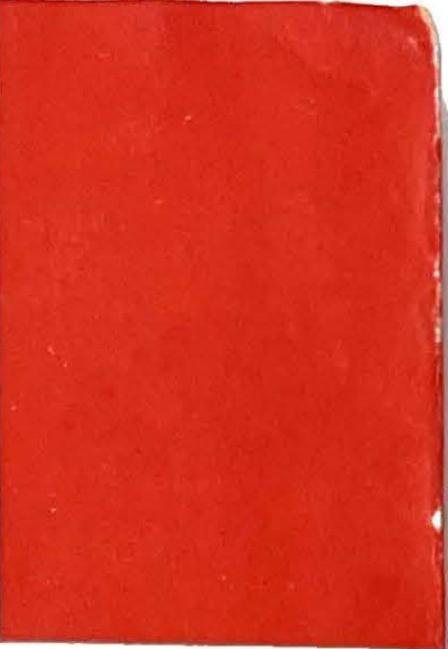
On the fourth day, the Guru was made to sit on an iron plate. It was heated from below. The iron plate became red

hot with the heat. The Guru's flesh began to be roasted. Burning red-hot sand was poured on his body. The Guru sat calm and quiet. He seemed to feel no pain. He did not sigh. He uttered no cry. He felt no anger against his torturers. He sat with his mind fixed on God. He kept repeating His Name. He kept repeating, 'Thy Will is ever sweet to me, O Lord !'

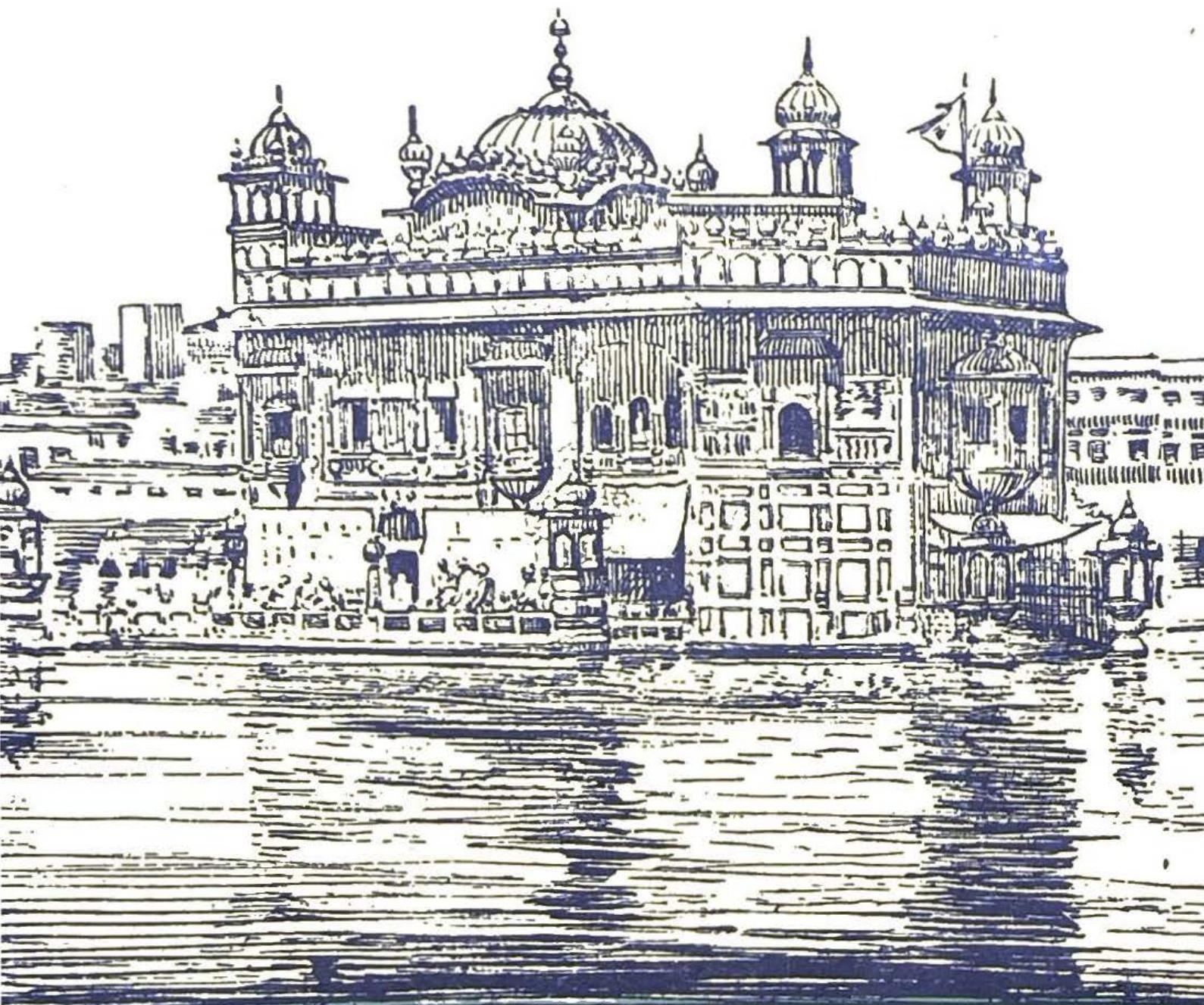
On the fifth day, the Guru was taken to the river Ravi. He was thrown into the running river. His body was too weak to stand up against the fast-flowing water. It was washed away. He himself returned to God's presence.

On the place where this happened stands a beautiful Gurdwara. It is called Dera Sahib. For the Sikhs, it is a very dear sacred place. They used to visit it in their thousands every day. Every year a very big gathering, called *Jor Mel*, was held there on the day on which the Guru

left for his Eternal Home or God's presence. But now the Sikhs are not free to visit that most sacred and dear place of theirs. How sad ! May God so arrange things that the Sikhs may be free to visit their sacred places now in Pakistan ! All Sikhs make this prayer everyday.



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Book III

(**Guru Har Gobind to Guru Tegh Bahadur**)

by  
Kartar Singh M.A.  
Formerly  
Professor of English  
Sikh National College  
Lahore  
and  
Gurdial Singh Dhillon, M.A.  
Principal  
Guru Har Krishan Public School  
New Delhi.

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## TO THE READER

In this book, third of the series, you will find stories about Guru Har Gobind, Guru Har Rai, Guru Harkrishan, and Guru Tegh Bahadur. Read them with your hearts filled with faith and a sincere desire to learn. We hope that you will like them and derive inspiration as well as useful instruction from them.

A few words have to be said about this revised edition of the book. The account of Guru Tegh Bahadur's tours and martyrdom being given here is different in some respects from that given in the original edition. The change was necessary because new facts have since come to light about these events. The account given in the original edition was based on the generally accepted popular version. But the great and indefatigable research scholar, Dr. Ganda Singh, has dug out fresh information from many original and most reliable sources which has to be accepted as correct; and, consequently, the generally accepted popular version has to be modified a good deal. He has set down his findings in an article entitled **The Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur** published in the February 1976 issue of the **Journal of Sikh Studies**. We have drawn upon that article and re-written the account of the Guru's tours and martyrdom. We express our thanks to the great research scholar and also to the editor of the said journal.

**The Authors**

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*The snake charmer let loose a cobra in the child's room.*

## I PRITHIA'S EVIL DEEDS

For long, no son had been born to Guru Arjan. His eldest brother, Prithia, and Prithia's wife, Karmo, were glad. They had a son named Meharban. They thought that after Guru Arjan their son would be the Guru. It was a pleasing thought for them. But then, by God's grace, a son was born to Guru Arjan Dev. He was named Sri Har Gobind. This event destroyed all their hopes. They were filled with grief. Their hearts began to burn.

Prithia was mean, evil and most selfish. His wife was even worse than he. She urged him to do something. He said to her, 'Don't lose heart. Our son shall be the Guru after Arjan. What if a son has been born to him ? I will not allow the child to live.'

They put their heads together. 'What should be done,' said they to each other, 'to get rid of the hated child ?

Karmo made a plan. She sent for an old nurse. The nurse was known to the Guru's family. Karmo said to her, 'Go to the Guru's house. Pretend to be a friend of his family. Try to poison

his newly-born son. If you succeed, you will get as much money as you please. At present, take this sum of a hundred rupees.

The nurse agreed. She went home. She applied poison to the nipples of her breast. She went to the Guru's house. She congratulated Mata Ganga. She said many sweet and pleasing things about the child. She did so in order to please his mother, Mata Ganga. The latter told her that the child was not well. He did not accept milk. The nurse said, 'Bring him to me. I know how to cure such children. I shall make him take milk from my breast. I have a son of his age at home.'

She took Sri Har Gobind in her lap. She swayed him in her arms. She spoke soft, sweet words to him. Then she drew out her breast. She offered it to him. 'Suck, my dear, suck,' said she. She tried to put the nipple of her breast into his mouth. But he kept his mouth tightly shut.

By then the poison on the nipples of her breast had entered her blood. She was herself poisoned. She fainted, fell back and died. Who can kill him whom God decides to save ?

The Guru thanked God for having saved his son. He composed a hymn for this purpose.

Prithia and his wife were very sad. Their plan had failed. But they did not give up their evil purpose. They began to think of other plans.

Prithia sent for a snake-charmer. That man had with him many poisonous snakes or cobras. Prithia gave him some money. He promised to give him a much larger sum later. He said to him, 'Go to the Guru's house. There, let loose a very poisonous cobra in his son's sleeping room. The cobra will bite him. He will die. I shall give you a large sum, a very large sum, as a reward.'

The snake-charmer agreed. He went to the Guru's house. He let loose a very poisonous cobra in Sri Har Gobind's sleeping room. He did it very cleverly, He did not let anybody see what he was doing. He went away. But Sri Har Gobind's attendants saw the cobra in time. They killed it at once.

The Guru again thanked God for having saved his son's life. He composed a hymn for the purpose.

Thus, Prithia's second attack also failed. He did not give up his evil purpose. He made a plan. He sent for Sri Har Gobind's Brahmin attendant. He gave him a large sum. Then he said to him, 'If you do as I tell you, I shall give you a much bigger sum. Take this poison. Mix it in some curd. Make the Guru's son take the curd. Then come to me. I shall make you rich.'

The Brahmin agreed. He went to wait upon Sri Har Gobind. He used to do so every day. He

mixed the poison in a cup of curd. He did so very cleverly. He did not let anybody see what he was doing. He took the child in his lap. He applied the cup of poisoned curd to the child's mouth. 'Take it, dear one,' he said. But Sri Har Gobind kept his mouth tightly shut. The wicked Brahmin tried again and again. But he did not succeed.

The Guru took the cup from the Brahmin's hand. He offered it to the child. But the latter did not accept it. He kept his mouth tightly shut. He began to cry. The Guru suspected that there was something wrong with the curd. He put some of it before a dog. The dog ate it greedily. A little after that, the dog fell down dead.

The Brahmin saw this. He said to himself, 'The Guru has found out my wicked purpose. He might punish me.' He was filled with grief and fear. He told the whole story to the Guru and begged forgiveness. The Guru was calm. He felt no anger against the wicked Brahmin. He let him go in peace.

Soon after going home, the Brahmin had an attack of colic, or severe pain in the stomach. He died in a few minutes.

The Guru again thanked God for having saved his son. He composed a hymn for this purpose.

## II

### NOT SAINTS, BUT-SAINT SOLDIERS, NOW

Jahangir had come to believe that Guru Arjan Dev was a deadly danger to Islam. The Emperor was eager to force all non-Muslims to become Muslims. But the Guru's teachings were making Muslims give up Islam and become Sikhs. Jahangir thought, 'Islam has to be saved. The Guru's activities must end. He must die.'

Hence he had ordered that the Guru be killed with tortures. The Guru was tortured for four hot summer days. He was seated and boiled in boiling water. He was made to sit on red-hot iron plates, heated from below. Red-hot burning sand was poured on his head. He bore all this without a groan, a cry, or a curse. Exposed to all this hellish heat, he remained composed, cool, and calm. On the fifth day his body was thrown into the Ravi. It was too weak to stand against the river's swift current. It was washed away. He himself returned to God.

Thus did Guru Arjan lay down his life for his faith. He became a martyr. He was the first Sikh martyr. No one else in the whole wide world

has ever borne so much and so well for his faith. Hence, he has been rightly called ‘The Prince among Martyrs and the Ocean of Calm’.

The news of Guru Arjan’s martyrdom reached Amritsar. Guru Har Gobind was sad, but he did not give himself up to grief. He kept perfectly calm. He said, ‘Let Granth Sahib be read. Baba Budha will do the reading. Let *ragis* (musicians) sing the Guru’s hymns’.

The singing of hymns and the reading of the Granth Sahib lasted for ten days. Then prayers were offered and sacred food (*karah parshad*) was distributed.

After that, the ceremony of seating Guru Har Gobind on the Guru’s throne was performed. Baba Budha dressed him in new clothes. He then led him to the throne.

Guru Har Gobind took his seat on it. Then Baba Budha placed before him a *seli*. He requested him to wear it as a mark of Guruship.

Now, what was a *seli*? *Seli* was a woollen cord or string. Holy men used to wear it as a necklace. Some of them used to twist it round their heads. The first five Sikh Gurus had used the *seli* as a necklace or twisted it round their head-dress.

When Baba Budha placed the *seli* before Guru Har Gobind, the latter said, ‘The times have changed. The *seli* will not do now. It suits such



*The times have changed. The seli will not do now.*

saints or holy men as want to worship God in peace. But there is no peace for us now. Our enemies are bent upon finishing us. They are determined to root out our religion. We have to defend ourselves. We have to defend our faith. From now on, the Sikhs should be not only saints, but soldiers also. They should be saint-soldiers. They should worship God not only in huts and temples, but also in the fields of battle. Your Gurus have to lead and guide you. Hence, from now on, not the *seli* but the sword will be the mark of Guruship. The Guru has to lead and guide you in times of peace, as well as in times of war. He has to be your leader in religious as well as in worldly matters. As a mark of this two-fold duty, I shall wear two swords. That on the right side will be the sword of *piri*—the mark of my being your leader and guide in religious matters. The one on the left will be the sword of *miri*, the mark of my being your leader and guide in worldly matters. That was why my father got me trained as a soldier, too. Let my Sikhs learn riding and use of all arms. Horses and arms should be their offerings to the Guru.

Baba Budha did as desired. Guru Har Gobind put on the two swords of *miri* and *piri*. He came to be called *Miri Piri Da Malik* or the Sikhs' guide in worldly as well as in religious affairs. The *seli* was placed in the treasury.

### III

## JAHANGIR FEELS GRATEFUL

Guru Har Gobind began to prepare an army of saint-soldiers. In his opinion, this was necessary for the defence of his Sikhs and his faith. He would not attack anybody. But if some one made war on him, he must be able to defend himself. In order to avoid war, he wanted to be ready for war.

Hundreds of Sikh youths came to him from all parts of the Panjab. They were eager to join the Guru's army. They said to him. 'We offer you our lives. We have nothing else to offer. We require no pay. We require your favour and the gift of God's Name.' The Guru gave to each a horse and weapons of war. He enlisted them in his army of saint-soldiers.

Chandu and other enemies of the Guru saw these warlike preparations to the Guru. They were filled with fear. They thought, 'The Guru might gain power in the Panjab. He might then turn his attention to us. He might punish us. We must take some timely action.'

They put their heads together. They decided to poison Jahangir's ears against the Guru. They met the Emperor. They said to him, 'Guru Arjan was killed by your orders. His son is now the

Guru. He is making warlike preparations. He keeps a strong army. He wants to take revenge for his father's death. He will soon grow too powerful. The evil must be nipped in the bud. His father was, no doubt, a danger to Islam. You did right in getting rid of him. Har Gobind is doubly dangerous. In the first place, he is a danger to Islam. Like his father, he is converting Muslims to his faith. Muslims are afraid of him. Secondly, he is preparing to fight against you. Thus, he is a danger to your kingdom, too. He aims at becoming a king himself. He already calls himself 'the true king.' He lives like a king. He cares for nobody.'

On hearing such reports, Jahangir decided to meet the Guru. He invited him to visit him in Delhi. His men came to Amritsar. They said to him, 'The Emperor is eager to see you. He wants to make friends with you.'

The Guru discussed the matter with his mother and principal Sikhs. It was decided that the Emperor's invitation should be accepted. So, the Guru set out for Delhi. On reaching the Jamuna river, he put up his camp at Majnu's hillock.

The Emperor received the Guru with great honour. He discussed a number of religious matters with him. The Guru made his point clear by reciting the Guru's hymns. The Emperor was satisfied that the Guru's rules and principles were worthy of praise. He admired the Guru for his great and noble qualities.

The Emperor and the Guru met almost every day. One day, the Emperor said to the Guru, 'I learn that you are fond of hunting. I am going out for a hunt. Will you go with me ?' The Guru agreed. They went out. In the forest, a terrible tiger came out of a bush, suddenly. He rushed at the Emperor. His men got filled with fear. They shot bullets and arrows. But they could not hit the tiger. The Emperor was in danger. He was too afraid to do anything to save himself. He called upon the Guru to save him. The Guru got down from his horse. Taking his shield and sword, he ran between the Emperor and the tiger. The tiger was about to spring upon the Guru. The Guru gave him a blow with his sword. The tiger fell lifeless to the ground. The Emperor got down from the horse. He said to the Guru, 'It was my good luck that you were with me. But for you, the tiger would have torn me to pieces. You put yourself in danger in order to save me. It was a most heroic act. I shall remember it, ever, with deep gratitude. You are a valued friend. They are all false and mean who say that you are a foe of mine. I shall never listen to them again. I shall never believe them. I shall never suspect you.'

The Guru said, 'In Guru Nanak's house there is all love and justice. My faith teaches me to be friendly with everybody. It teaches me to do good to all.'

## IV

### THE TRUE KING AND THE FALSE KING

Emperor Jahangir had invited Guru Har Gobind to visit him in Delhi. The Guru had accepted the invitation. He had gone to Delhi. The Emperor received him with great honour. They met each other a number of times. The Emperor asked many questions about God and religion. The Guru's replies pleased and satisfied him. He formed a very high opinion about the Guru. He began to consider the Guru to be a real saint, gifted with lofty wisdom.

After a time, the Emperor decided to go to Agra. He invited the Guru to accompany him. The Guru hesitated at first. But on receiving repeated invitations, he agreed to accompany the Emperor. They together set out for Agra.

They travelled at pleasure. They enjoyed the hunt on the way. As they were hunting, the Emperor said to the Guru, 'You occupy the seat of Guru Nanak. You should have no connection with worldly affairs. Your forefathers were not kings. You do not have any part of the land under your rule. Still, you call yourself "the true king". Your Sikhs address you as "the true king". On the other hand, my forefathers were emperors. My rule

extends over many lands. Still, your Sikhs call me a "false king". Is all this true?"

The Guru replied, 'I live and act in accordance with Guru Nanak's teachings and example. I have to look to the religious, as well as the worldly, affairs of my Sikhs. A truly religious man cannot cut or shut himself away from the world. He has to mind his worldly, as well as his religious, duties. Hence, I have to maintain a connection with worldly affairs. But I don't call myself "the true king". I am not a king. I have never told any one to call me "the true king". I love my Sikhs. My Sikhs love me. If, in their love, they call me "the true king", I cannot forbid them. Sometimes, they go even further. They call me the master of this world and the next. Their love finds expression in such phrases. It is natural.'

The Emperor was not quite satisfied. He and the Guru went off to their respective tents. The tents were in the forest lying between Delhi and Agra. The Emperor and the Guru were engaged in hunting in that forest.

It so happened that a grass-cutter was cutting grass in that forest. He was a Sikh. He had not seen the Guru till then. He heard that the Guru had come there. He made up his mind to see the Guru. He went about looking for him. He met some people. They were the Emperor's men. He said to them, 'I wish to see the true king. I am told

that he is here somewhere. Can you tell me where he is ? It will be very kind of you to do so.'

The Emperor's men considered their own Emperor to be the true king. So they said to him, 'Do you see that tall shady tree, over there ? He is sitting under that tree.' The grass-cutter thanked them for the information. He went in haste to that tree. He had with him only one *taka*, a two-pice coin. That two-pice coin was the only offering that he could make. He placed it before the Emperor. He fell at his feet. He said to him, 'O true king, all earthly kings are false. They rule over small parts of this world. Their rule lasts for only a short time. But your rule is everlasting. It extends over this world and the next. I am a poor Sikh. I seek your protection. Get all my sins pardoned. Save me from being taken to hell.'

A number of ministers and others were then with the Emperor. He said to them, 'This simple man says that I have the power to save him from hell. He says that I can get his sins pardoned. But I don't have any such power. I cannot protect even myself. How can I save him ? Evidently, he has mistaken me for the Guru. Evidently, he has not so far seen the Guru. Hence, the Guru cannot have told him to call him "the true king". The Guru was right. He has not told anybody to call him "the true king". His Sikhs have given him this name out of their love for him.'

Then he said to the grass-cutter, 'I am not the true king. I am a false king. The true king sits there, under that tree.'

The grass-cutter took up his two-pice coin. He ran with it to the Guru. He fell at his feet. He made the same request to him as he had made to the Emperor. The Guru said to him affectionately, 'Rise, brother, I tell you how to be happy in this world, as well as, in the next. Ever be sweet and humble in your behaviour. Love everybody and hate no one. Live honestly. Earn your living with honest labour. Share your earnings with the needy. Always do good to others. Don't try to get what belongs to others by right. Remember God. Regard Him as watching you every moment of your life. Live in accordance with the Guru's teachings. You will be happy here and hereafter.'

## V

### THE DELIVERER

Emperor Jahangir and Guru Har Gobind were together at Agra for quite a long time. During this time, the Emperor saw that the Guru was unusually strong in body and mind. He was an excellent rider. He was quick and skilful in the use of the sword. He could kill a tiger with a single stroke of his sword. His arrows never missed their mark. He was highly respected by his Sikhs. He had an army of strong, fearless, and well-trained soldiers. His soldiers obeyed him without asking any questions. They were ready to lay down their lives for him. His army was increasing, day by day.

Jahangir saw all this. He became uneasy. He thought, 'The Guru is becoming more and more powerful, day by day. Soon he might become too strong. He might set up a kingdom of his own in the Panjab. Suitable action should be taken to check him.'

He expressed his fears to his ministers. They had been bribed by Chandu. As you know, Chandu had killed Guru Arjan Dev with inhuman cruelty. The growing friendship between the Emperor and the Guru was causing him much fear. He feared

that the Guru might persuade the Emperor to punish him. He urged the Emperor's ministers to put an end to this friendship.

So, the ministers said to the Emperor, 'The Guru is really dangerous. He is making preparations against you. He will soon rebel against your rule. He should be sent away to a far-off place. Why not send him to the fort at Gwalior as a prisoner? When he is away, his Sikhs will be leaderless. His soldiers will go away to their homes. That will be the end of his army. Then there will be no further danger from him. He will become powerless and harmless.'

The Emperor accepted his minister's advice. He ordered that the Guru be imprisoned for twelve years. The fort of Gwalior was to be his prison.

The news of the Guru's imprisonment spread among his Sikhs very fast. It made them sad and agitated. Groups of them set out for Gwalior in order to see their Guru. They were not permitted to see him. They kissed the wall of the fort. They bowed in the direction of the Guru's room. Then they returned to the Panjab. This became a regular practice with the Sikhs.

At that time, fifty-two rajas loas were kept as prisoners in the Gwalior fort. They had been deprived of their kingdoms and thrones by Jahangir. They got a very bad treatment in the fort. They



*The grass-cutter and the Emperor.*

were not given proper and sufficient food. They were made to wear dirty clothes. Their condition was extremely miserable.

The Guru was deeply pained, to see them. He at once, took steps to improve their condition. The Emperor had allowed ample rations for him. He desired that his rations be distributed among the needy rajas. He ate much less than they. The prisoners' life became much better. They ate good and sufficient food. They got new, clean clothes to wear. The Guru told them of God and Guru Nanak. His teachings made them forget their sorrow. They became his Sikhs.

The Guru's imprisonment agitated the Sikhs. They were getting restless and angry. Jahangir came to know about the growing agitation and restlessness among the Sikhs. He became uneasy. Many God-fearing Muslims also did not like the Emperor's action against the Guru. One of such God-fearing holy men was Hazrat Mian Mir of Lahore. He met Jahangir. He said to him, 'Guru Har Gobind is a man of God. He is dear to God. It is not good to imprison such a holy man. No good can come out of such action. He should be released.'

The Emperor accepted Mian Mir's advice. He sent orders for the Guru's release. The Guru had been in prison for over two years. The imprisoned fifty-two rajas heard that the Guru was about to be

released. This news made them sad. They feared that they would again begin to be treated in the old bad way. The Guru said to them, 'Don't fear. I shall take you all with me.'

The Guru was informed that he was free. But he said, 'I will not go alone. All these rajas must go out with me, or I shall stay here with them.' The Guru's words were conveyed to the Emperor. He said, 'I cannot release all of them. But I shall release as many of them as can come out holding the Guru's garment and hands.' On hearing this, the Guru got prepared a special garment. It had fifty tapering cloth strips attached to it all round. Fifty rajas held these strips, one each. Two of them held the Guru's hand, one each. Thus all of them came out of the fort, holding the Guru's garment and hands.

Because of this, Guru Har Gobind came to be called *Bandi Chhorr*. (The Deliverer of Prisoners)—the holy man who had freed prisoners.

## VI

### DRAWN BY LOVE

Once, a poor devout Sikh felt a strong, deep desire to do some service to the Guru. He said to himself, 'I would like to invite him to my humble hut, and give him something to eat.' But the very next moment he said to himself, 'Man, don't be a fool. Don't forget yourself. You are a poor man. With the whole days' hard labour you earn a small amount. That amount is just enough to provide coarse food for you and your wife. The Guru is a great person. He is the King of both worlds. He has countless rich Sikhs who can invite him to their grand houses and provide dainty food. What have you to offer ? How dare you expect him to come to your poor hut, and partake of your coarse bread ? So, don't let your thoughts wander that way.'

Still, the wish to invite and serve the Guru did not leave him. He could not expel it from his heart. He talked of it to his wife. At the same time, he said, 'I doubt if he will accept my invitation. What should we do ?'

His wife's faith was stronger than his. She welcomed his proposal. She said, 'We need have no doubts, at all. The Guru is drawn by deep, sincere love. He is not fond of tasty dishes. He

gladly accepts even coarse food from those who love him truly and sincerely. If we prepare even coarse food with hearts full of true love, he will certainly come. He will come of his own accord.'

The following day, the Sikh worked harder and longer than usual. He earned a bit more money than he used to earn before. He went home. They decided to prepare for the Guru *missi rotis*, cakes of bread baked by using a mixture of wheat and gram flour, mixed with salt, spices, and finely cut onions.

With the money earned by him, he purchased wheat, grams, onions, and other articles needed for the purpose. His wife ground the wheat and the grams. She kneaded the wheat and the gram flour together. She salted and spiced it. She then mixed finely cut onions in the kneaded flour. Then she baked a number of *missi rotis*.

All the time that the cakes were being prepared, the couple kept repeating God's Name. They also kept reciting the Guru's hymns. The *missi rotis* were ready. They wrapped them in a piece of clean cloth. They placed them on a stool. Then they sat on the floor with folded hands. They fixed their thoughts on the Guru. They said, again and again, 'O dear, true Guru, come and take the humble, coarse food prepared by us'

Guru Har Gobind was, at that time, some miles away. He was engaged in hunting. Their prayers

reached him. He turned his horse in their direction. Riding at full speed, he arrived at their door. They were overjoyed to see him. Their prayer had been heard and answered. Their love and faith had drawn him. ‘How lucky we are !’ thought they. ‘How kind the Guru is !’ They stood up to receive him. They bowed to him. They touched his feet. They then stood with folded hands and bowed heads.

Alighting from the horse, the Guru said, ‘O my dear Sikhs, I am hungry, very hungry. I would like to take *missi rotis*. Please be quick.’

You can easily guess how glad they were to hear the Guru’s words. They placed the *missi rotis* before him. He ate them with evident pleasure. After taking his fill, he said, ‘I have never before tasted anything so sweet and tasty. May God and Guru Nanak bless you !’

Saying this, he galloped away.

## VII

### PAINDE KHAN

Once, Guru Har Gobind was staying at Kartarpur, in the present district of Jullundur. Some Pathans of village Wada Mir came to him. Each of them had a sword and a shield. They requested the Guru to take them in his service as paid soldiers. He enlisted them in his army. A large number of Muhammedans were already serving in his army as paid soldiers.

Among the Pathans was a tall and powerful youth of sixteen. His name was Painde Khan. He had large eyes, strong arms, and a thick neck. The Guru was pleased with his appearance. He made him an officer in his army. He made special arrangements for Painde Khan's training as a soldier. He treated him like a son. Painde Khan grew very strong in body. He could perform wonderful feats of bodily strength. Nobody was his equal. No one could shoot arrows, or use the sword, as well as he did. He was also a mighty good wrestler. No wrestler dared to fight him in a wrestling match.

The Guru was greatly pleased with Painde Khan. He used to make him presents of valuable

clothes, horses, and such articles of food as could promote bodily strength.

A few years later, an imperial army attacked the Guru at Amritsar. The army had been sent by the Mughal governor of Lahore. A bloody battle was fought at the site of the present-day Gurdwara Pipli Sahib. The Mughal army was defeated. In the battle, Painde Khan fought very bravely. He killed a large number of Mughal soldiers and army officers. The Guru praised and rewarded him.

But soon Painde Khan's head was turned. He became proud of his strength and bravery. He began to boast, 'It is needless for the Guru to enlist so many soldiers. I am as good as an army of these people. If I am allowed, I will show the Guru's enemies what I can do. It is I that defeated the countless Mughal army at Amritsar. Had I not been there, no one would have had the courage to face them. The Guru's Sikhs would have all fled.'

The Guru was greatly displeased to hear these boasts of Painde Khan. He felt that Painde Khan had insulted his brave Sikhs. He decided that Painde Khan should not be called upon to take part in any future battle. Still, Painde Khan was allowed to keep his rank as an army officer. He was paid his salary regularly. He was also given valuable presents, now and then. But he was not called upon to take part in any battle.

Once, a devout Sikh made the Guru a present of a horse, a hawk, a dress, and some weapons. The Guru gave the hawk to his son Baba Gurditta. All the other offerings he gave to Painde Khan, and said to him, ‘Whenever you come to my darbar, put on this dress, wear these weapons, and ride this horse.’

Painde Khan’s son-in-law, Usman Khan, saw these presents. He asked Painde Khan to give all the presents to him. Painde Khan said, ‘The Guru ordered me to use these presents myself. I have to appear before him in this dress, wearing these weapons, and riding this horse. I cannot part with them. I cannot disobey the Guru. He will be displeased. He will dismiss me from his service.’

But Usman Khan managed to get these things with the help of Painde Khan’s wife. He also caught the hawk that had been given to Baba Gurditta. Painde Khan knew all this. But he was helpless. He kept mum.

After a time, Guru Har Gobind sent for Painde Khan. He came on foot, wearing dirty clothes. The Guru said to him, ‘Where are the clothes, the weapons, and the horse that I gave you ? Speak the truth.’

Painde Khan replied, “All those things are in my possession. On receiving your orders, I hastened to come to you without changing my dress. In hurry, I did not saddle the horse ; I did



**Guru Har Gobind and Painde Khan.**

not put on the weapons. I swear by you that I speak the truth.'

The Guru then said, 'Do you, or any of your people, possess Gurditta's hawk?' Painde Khan replied, 'I swear by you that I know nothing about the hawk.'

The Guru said to Bhai Bidhi Chand in his ear, 'Go and bring all the presents and the hawk.' Bhai Bidhi Chand went to Usman Khan's house. He found him asleep. He quietly took away all those things. During his absence, the Guru again urged Painde Khan to tell the truth. But he swore, for the third time, that he knew nothing about the hawk and that the Guru's presents were all in his possession at his home.

By then, Bhai Bidhi Chand had come back. The Guru called on him to produce the sword, the dress, and the hawk that he had brought from Usman Khan's house.

On seeing them, Painde Khan became speechless. But he did not repent. He did not beg the Guru's pardon. The Guru ordered him to be expelled from the darbar. Painde Khan said angrily, 'I will go and complain to the Emperor. You will suffer as your father did. Then I shall have my revenge.'

Painde Khan went away in anger. He and his son-in-law made plans against the Guru. They

went to the governors of Jullundur and Lahore. They told them many things against the Guru. They urged them to attack him. They agreed. They got the Emperor's permission to attack the Guru. Painde Khan induced five hundred Muhammedan horsemen to join him. Along with them he joined the governors' armies.

The governors of Lahore and Jullundur, Painde Khan, Usman Khan, and the Pathans of Bassi fell upon the Guru. Their army numbered more than twenty thousand. The Guru was then at Kartarpur. He was prepared to meet his enemies. His army was six thousand strong. All his soldiers were determined to fight to the last. 'Death or victory' was their war-cry.

The battle lasted three days. The Guru's soldiers performed wonderful feats of bravery and strength. They killed thousands of their enemies. The governors of Lahore and Jullundur were killed by the Guru himself. Then Painde Khan attacked the Guru. But the Guru killed him with a single stroke of his sword. When Painde Khan fell dead, the Guru felt pity and regret. He took off his shield and put it on Painde Khan's face so as to shade it from the sun. He then, prayed to God to pardon Painde Khan, and grant him a seat in heaven.

## VIII

### SADHU AND RUPA

Once, a Sikh named Sadhu and his fifteen-year old son named Rupa were working in their fields. It was summer. The day was very hot. They filled a new, clean, earthen pot with water from a well. They hung the pot on a tree.

After some time, they felt thirsty. Sadhu took down the earthen pot from the tree. The water in the pot had become very cool. They thought, 'The water is very cool. It is fit for Guru Har Gobind. It would be nice if the Guru were to come and drink it. How lucky should we be ! The day is extremely hot. We are very thirsty. But we should not drink this water. Let us set it aside for the Guru. Let us pray to him to come and take it. We shall satisfy our thirst only after he has drunk a part of this pure, cool water.'

Thinking thus, they hung back the earthen pot on the tree. They sat with folded hands. They began to pray, 'O dear, true Guru come and drink this pure, cool water, as much of it as you like. It is more than enough for you and us. But we shall not satisfy our thirst until you have drunk out of this pot. O dear, true Guru, you always fulfil the desires of your servants. You hear and answer

their prayers. Hear and accept our prayer now. Come and drink some of this pure, cool water. We may die of thirst, but we will not drink even a drop until you have partaken of this water.'

The day was very hot. They were very thirsty. Their throats and lips were dry. But they did not even think of satisfying their thirst. Their minds were fixed on the Guru. They went on thinking of him, and praying to him, and waiting for him.

Guru Har Gobind was at that time taking rest in a cool room, over fifteen kilometres away. He heard their prayer. He got up at once. He mounted his horse. He started towards the two Sikhs. He rode at a gallop. He reached there. He found them fainting on account of the heat and thirst. They were overjoyed to see him coming. He said to them, 'O my dear Sikhs, I am very thirsty; give me some cool water to allay my thirst.'

Full of joy, they took down the earthen pot. They gave it to him. He was pleased at the touch of the very cool earthen pot. He found the water to be very cool and pleasant. He had a hearty drink. Then he gave back the earthen pot to Sadhu. He said, 'Drink now. Satisfy your thirst as I have satisfied mine. The water is excellent. It is like nectar. It is very cool, pleasant, and refreshing. It is the sweetest and most pleasant drink I have ever had. I am highly pleased with you. Have you any special wish to get fulfilled ?

Come, let me know. You will get what you desire.'

Sadhu and Rupa satisfied their thirst. They said to the Guru, 'You are very kind. You have accepted our prayer. We are immensely glad. Kindly bless us so that we may ever love and serve you, that God may be pleased with us.'

The Guru said, 'You are blessed. Your name will live in the world. Whenever you have some difficulty, pray to God, think of Guru Nanak. You will overcome your difficulty.'

They bowed and touched the Guru's feet. They were extremely happy and grateful. They continued to lead a life of work, service, and prayer. They ever did their best to make others happy and contented.

## IX

### BABA ATAL

Baba Atal was a son of Guru Har Gobind. He was very smart, active, and sportive. He was deeply religious. When playing with the children of the city, he used to tell them many wise things. Whatever he said, even in jest, had some deep meaning. All his playmates loved and obeyed him. Guru Har Gobind was specially kind to him. He used to take him in his lap, fondle him, and say, 'God has given you much power. Don't make a show of it. If you have to use it, use it with caution and wisdom. Don't waste it away on little things.' Baba Atal used to say in reply, 'O true king, all power that I possess, I have obtained from you. Your store-house can never get empty. Therefore, I may use it to my heart's content. It will never get used up.'

One of Baba Atal's playmates was named Mohan. He was eight years of age. He was thus of about the same age as Baba Atal. He and Baba Atal used to play bat and ball. One day, they played on until night fell. At the end of the play, it was Baba Atal's turn to use the bat. It was Mohan's turn to throw and pick up the ball. It was agreed between them that Baba Atal would get his turn the next morning.

Both boys went home. At night, Mohan got up from his bed to answer the call of nature. The night was pitch dark. In the dark, he was bitten by a cobra. He began to cry loudly. His cries awoke his parents. They rushed to him. They found him fainting. They sent for a doctor. But the cobra's poison had done its work. The boy died of the snake-bite.

Next morning, Baba Atal went to Mohan's house. He found Mohan's parents and others weeping. He was told that Mohan was dead. Baba Atal said, 'No, he is not dead. He pretends to be dead. He does not wish to give me my turn with the bat. I will make him get up.'

Saying this, he went to Mohan's room. He touched him with his bat and said, 'Mohan, get up, say "*Sat Nam Wahiguru*". Open your eyes. You should not be so late to rise from bed. I must have my turn at the bat.'

Upon this, Mohan got up as if from sleep. He had been dead for four hours and a half. Naturally, his parents were filled with joy. Baba Atal and Mohan went out and began to play.

Guru Har Gobind came to know what his son had done. He was not at all pleased. He said, 'It has become a habit with Atal to waste away his powers. He has not acted well or wisely. Now, whenever any boy may die his parents will bring him to our door. Whose dead son shall we bring



back to life, and whose son shall we allow to remain dead ? We must all obey God's Will. We should not try to undo what He has done.'

When Baba Atal returned home, the Guru said to him angrily, 'I teach men to obey God's Will. But you act against His Will.' Baba Atal said, 'O true king, may you live for ages. I feel that I should go back to Our True Home.'

So saying, he went away. He took his bath in the sacred tank. He then went four times round the sacred temple of Har Mandar. Then he went to the tank named Kaulsar. He sat near its bank. Bending his head forward, he supported his chin with his bat. With his eyes fixed on the sacred temple, he repeated the *Japji*. Then he offered prayers. After that, he departed to the True Home or God's presence.

Guru Har Gobind soon learnt about Baba Atal's departure from the world. He advised his family and his Sikhs not to weep. He said, 'All have to die. Such is the Almighty's Will. What pleases him is good. We should accept it cheerfully. Atal's name and fame shall live for ever.'

Baba Atal's body was cremated at the spot where he had left it. The Guru said, 'Atal has, by God's Will, given up his body in his ninth year. A nine-storeyed temple shall be built here. It shall be seen from afar. At this shrine, the hungry will get food free, every day.'

At the spot stands a beautiful nine-storeyed gurdwara, called Baba Atal Sahib. Faithful Sikhs distribute cakes of bread to all visitors. The hungry people assemble there and repeatedly say,

**'O Baba Atal,  
Pakkian pakaiyan ghal.'**

**'O Baba Atal, send us well baked cakes.'**

# X

## THE TENDER-HEARTED SOLDIER-GURU

Guru Har Rai was the seventh Guru of the Sikhs. Like his grandfather, Guru Har Gobind, he was a soldier as well as a saint. He had a strong body, as all soldiers should have. He was a fast and skilful rider. At the same time, he had a very tender heart, like all true saints. From his early life, he had shown a combination of strength of body and tenderness of heart. But his day-to-day life was moulded more by his tenderness of heart than by his strength of body.

His principal guiding principles in life were two. Both of them were the result of his tenderness of heart. The first of these principles was to do good to others. He felt joy in doing good to others, even to those who were his enemies. Nothing was more pleasing to him than a good and kind act. The second principle of his life was to avoid causing pain, harm or grief to anyone.

Guru Har Rai fashioned his life and activities in the light of these two guiding principles. This fact will be clear from what is given below :

He ran a free dispensary for all. His storehouse contained even most rare and costly medicines. All

the sick and injured persons who came there for treatment, were served with care and tenderness. In this way, he put into practice his principle of doing good to others.

We know that Guru Nanak started the practice of running the Guru's *langar* or free kitchen for all. This practice was followed by the later Gurus, too. Free food was given to all during the usual hours of the morning and evening meals. Guru Har Rai paid special attention to the Guru's *langar*. To those who worked in the free kitchen, he gave the following instructions, 'The kitchen must be open to all comers, day and night, at all hours. Additional food must always be kept ready, even after the usual hours of meals. Whoever comes to the kitchen, early or late, must be served properly. None should be sent away disappointed. If you refuse food to a hungry visitor, you cause him pain and suffering. To cause pain or grief to anyone's heart is a sin. Remember always what Baba Farid has said in this connexion. He has said,

"All men's hearts are jewels, it is  
wicked to cause them grief or pain.

If you desire to see the dear Lord, cause  
no grief or pain to anyone's heart."

'The heart deserves more care and respect than even the temple or the mosque. The temple and

the mosque can be repaired or rebuilt. But it is impossible to repair or rebuild a broken heart.'

He desired his Sikhs to act in the same manner. He desired them to run free kitchens and to share their food with others. When his Sikhs came to visit him, he used to ask them, 'Do you run free kitchens ? Do you share your food with others ? Do you feed persons who come after the time fixed for distribution of food ?'

He used to tell them, 'No one who comes to your door for food, should go away disappointed. Treat all such visitors in the same way as you treat your relations. Serve them with affection, even if they come before or after the time fixed for distribution of food.'

He would then repeat to them Baba Farid's words given above. He would also tell them his own views on the matter.

Guru Har Rai was a mighty hunter like his grandfather. In the afternoon, he used often to mount his horse and go out for a hunt. He chased and caught wild animals like the deer. But he did not kill them. His tender heart would not let him do so. He brought them home, and let them loose in his zoo. They were protected and fed there with kindness and care.

## XI

### GURU HAR RAI AND DARA SHIKOH

Dara Shikoh was the eldest son of Emperor Shah Jahan. The Emperor loved him more than he did any of his other three sons. Once the prince fell dangerously ill. The best doctors were consulted. They all did their utmost. But they could not cure the prince. The Emperor then called together a large number of wise men and doctors from all over the empire. They discussed and considered the matter very carefully. They decided what medicines should be given to the suffering prince. For these articles the Emperor searched everywhere in his empire. But all search was in vain. The articles of the required weight and quality could not be found anywhere.

At last, the Emperor's prime minister said to him, 'Guru Har Rai's store contains all sorts of medicines. I am sure, these articles can be had from there.'

The Emperor was not at all friendly with the Guru and his Sikhs. He had filled up their famous sacred Baoli Sahib of Lahore. He had built a mosque on the site of the free kitchen there. He had caused much trouble to Guru Har Gobind.

On four occasions he had sent his armies against him. He also knew that his father, Jahangir, had ordered that Guru Arjan be killed with tortures. He also knew that Jahangir had imprisoned Guru Har Gobind. ‘Guru Har Rai,’ he said, ‘knows all this. How can I expect him to be kind to me ?’

But his prime minister said to him, ‘Guru Har Rai is full of kindness and sympathy for all. His main principle is to do good to others, even to his enemies. He bears enmity to none. All who seek his help, are treated by him with kindness. If you request him for these articles, he will not disappoint you.’

The Emperor sent one of his men with a letter to the Guru. In it he prayed to the Guru to forget the bitter past. He appealed to him to send the articles needed to cure Dara Shikoh. The Guru was true to his principles of life. He would return good for evil. So, he sent the needed articles most readily. In addition to the two articles asked by the Emperor, he sent a rare pearl. He said, ‘The pearl should be ground into a fine powder and given to the prince along with the other medicines.’

Dara Shikoh was soon cured of his illness. The Emperor was filled with joy and gratitude. He decided to forget all his enmity to the Guru. He took a vow that he would never again cause him any trouble.



Guru Har Rai giving medicines for Dara Shikoh.

After some years Emperor Shah Jahan fell ill. His sons began to fight for the throne. Dara Shikoh was the eldest among them. Shah Jahan had wanted him to sit on the throne after him. But Aurangzeb fought against him, and defeated him. Dara Shikoh ran for his life. He came into the Panjab.

Aurangzeb issued an order that none should help or receive Dara Shikoh. It was added that any one doing any favour to Dara Shikoh, would incur Aurangzeb's highest displeasure. Dara Shikoh wandered from town to town, and village to village. No one gave him any help. He did not know what to do, and where to do.

At last, he thought of Guru Har Rai. He knew that the Guru's medicines had cured him. He felt sure that the Guru would help him. He knew that the Guru had an army of two thousand and two hundred horsemen. More could join, if he desired. So, he decided to meet him and beg for assistance. He met the Guru at Goindwal.

Now, Guru Har Rai was a skilful and mighty soldier. Guru Har Gobind had said to him, 'Keep two thousand and two hundred horsemen ever with you. But, as far as possible, avoid fighting.' By nature, also, he was a man of peace. He was determined to follow the policy of peace and friendliness.

Dara Shikoh met the Guru, and asked for help and advice. The Guru received him very kindly.

It was heard the next day that Aurangzeb's army was coming to catch him. He asked the Guru to prevent his being caught. He himself hurried towards Lahore.

The Guru sent his army to the Beas river. Aurangzeb's army soon arrived near the other bank. Seeing the Guru's horsemen, it halted there. It had no heart to fight. In this way Dara Shikoh was able to escape. After a day or two, the Guru's army returned from the river. Aurangzeb's army crossed the river and marched off towards Lahore.

## XII

### THE GURU HELD PRISONER BY A SIKH

A devout Sikh named Bhai Gonda served and waited upon Guru Har Rai. He served the Guru with love and sincerity. He always kept his mind fixed on God. He kept repeating God's Name while engaged in work or service. He treated others with sweet humility. In short, he was a saint in thought, word, and deed. He thought, spoke, and acted as a true saint should do. The Guru was very much pleased with his service and devotion.

One day the Guru said to him, 'Bhai Gonda, go to Kabul. Preach the Guru's religion there. Make people worship God and repeat His Name. Teach them the Guru's hymns. Teach them to repeat and sing these hymns. You will receive there offerings in plenty. With those offerings run a free kitchen. Feed and help all the needy ones that come to your door. Take care that no one goes away disappointed. The offerings will be more than you need for the free kitchen. What remains unused there, should be sent to me for the Guru's free kitchen here. Always remember God. Have full faith in Him and the Guru. You will be

successful. These are your duties. I hope that you will discharge them well.'

Now, Kabul was a far off place in another country. It was a foreign place. Bhai Gonda would be a foreigner there. The land was ruled by a Muhammadan king. Most of the people were Muhammadans. Hence, in those days it was not quite a safe place for a non-Muslim foreigner to live in. To preach, in such a place, any religion other than Islam was even more dangerous. But Gonda had full faith in God and the Guru. He accepted the duties readily and cheerfully.

He set out for Kabul. On reaching there, he built a Sikh temple. He began to carry out the duties assigned to him by Guru Har Rai.

One morning, while repeating the *Japji*, he fixed his thoughts on the Guru. He pictured the Guru's feet in his mind. He clasped them tightly. He forgot everything else. He was completely absorbed in seeing the Guru with his mind's eye. He neither saw nor heard anything happening near about him.

Far away from him, the Guru was sitting on his throne. He, at once, became aware of what was passing in Bhai Gonda's mind. He felt that his feet were tightly held by that devout Sikh. He sat firmly on the throne. He did not move his feet even the least. He did not want to pull away his feet from Bhai Gonda's clasp.

Guru Har Rai remained sitting thus for several hours. At mid-day, a Sikh came to him and said, 'O true Guru, dinner is ready.' The Guru did not look up. He did not move. He made no reply. The Sikh went away, wondering. He returned after some time and said, 'O Guru, dinner is ready.' But the Guru made no reply. The Sikh went away again, deeply puzzled. He returned after a longer interval. He again said, 'O true Guru, dinner is ready. May I serve it up?' But the Guru sat unmoved and silent. He seemed to have heard nothing at all.

The Sikhs grew uneasy. Several of them gathered near the Guru. They were just about to speak out together. The Guru opened his eyes. He broke silence and said, 'Brother Sikhs, Bhai Gonda is in Kabul. He has clasped my feet. How can I withdraw them from him? I have been his prisoner since morning. How can I take my dinner until he releases me? As long as he holds me by the feet, I cannot move; I must wait.'

The Guru remained sitting thus till sunset. It was then that Bhai Gonda woke up and came to himself. He opened his eyes. He bowed. He repeated '*Sat Nam Wahiguru*' a number of times. Then he took away his mind from the Guru's feet. The Guru felt that his feet were free from Bhai Gonda's clasp. He opened his eyes. Then it was that he took his meal.

### XIII

## AURANGZEB AND GURU HAR RAI

Emperor Shah Jahan desired that, after him, his eldest son, Dara Shikoh, should become the Emperor. He fell ill. His sons thought that he was about to die. They began to fight among themselves for the throne. Aurangzeb defeated his brothers. Dara Shikoh ran away to save his life. He was caught and killed by Aurangzeb. Another of his brothers left the country to save his life. The third brother was imprisoned by him at Agra. He also kept his father a prisoner at the same place. It was thus that he became the Emperor. He was soon secure on the throne of Delhi. There was none to oppose him.

Aurangzeb was clever, hard-hearted, and cruel. He had come to believe that his own religion was the only true religion. He thought that all other religions were false. He made up his mind to make Islam the religion of all his subjects. Most of his subjects were Hindus. So, he decided to uproot the Hindu religion. He pulled down Hindu temples and broke their idols. He built mosques in their place. Thousands of temples were destroyed by his orders. Thousands of Hindus were forced to become Muhammadans.

In the meantime, complaints were made to Aurangzeb against Guru Har Rai. It was said that the Guru had blessed and assisted Dara Shikoh. He was preaching a religion of his own. Many Muhammadans were becoming his followers. Moreover, his sacred book, Granth Sahib, contained many remarks against Muhammadans and their religion. So, it was added, the Guru was an enemy of the Emperor. He was also an enemy of Islam. Action should be taken against him.

Aurangzeb decided to find out the truth about the Guru and his religion. He sent for the Guru. The Guru said that he had made a vow never to see Aurangzeb. He called together his principal Sikhs. The matter was discussed with them. They suggested that the Guru's elder son, Sri Ram Rai, should go to Delhi. He should meet the Emperor, and answer all his questions. Sri Ram Rai agreed to go. Guru Har Rai permitted him to do so.

Sri Ram Rai got ready to set out for Delhi. Guru Har Rai said to him, 'In all your words and actions, you should fix your thoughts on God. Say nothing and do nothing that may be against the principles of the Sikh religion. The Emperor might make some objections to the Granth Sahib. Answer him calmly, but fearlessly. Remember one thing. The Emperor Jahangir wanted Guru Arjan to omit some passages from the Granth Sahib. He said that those passages contained certain remarks

against the Muhammadans and their religion. But Guru Arjan refused to alter even a letter or a vowel. He suffered much on that account. But he remained firm. His example should guide you. In all things, rely on God and the Guru. Keep true to the principles of Guru Nanak's faith. All will go well with you.'

Sri Ram Rai agreed to remember and obey the Guru's wishes. He set out for Delhi. On reaching there, he met the Emperor. He was well received at the Emperor's court. Aurangzeb put him many questions. The first was, 'Why did your father help Dara Shikoh?' Sri Ram Rai replied, 'The Guru has no enmity with anyone. His chief principle is to do good to others, even to those who are his enemies. If anyone in difficulty comes to him for help, he can never send him away disappointed. Dara Shikoh was in great trouble. He appealed to the Guru to save his life. He had already saved his life from a terrible illness. The Guru could not send him away broken-hearted. He did a good and holy act in saving a life in danger. He did nothing against you. He or his army did not fight against you or your army.'

The Emperor then said, 'Your Guru Nanak has written against the Muhammadans and their religion. In one place he has said :

"The clay of a Mussalman may find its way into the hands of a ptoter ;



*Shri Ram Rai at the court of Aurangzeb.*

He makes vessels and bricks out of it,  
It cries out as it burns."

'Why,' said the Emperor, 'have the Mussalmans been thus abused in your Sacred Book ?'

Sri Ram Rai did not wish to displease the Emperor. He made up his mind to alter the line of Guru Nanak's hymn in order to please Aurangzeb. He forgot the orders which Guru Har Rai had given him. He said, 'Your Majesty, Guru Nanak wrote, "*Mitti beiman ki*", that is "the clay of a faithless person !" He did not write "*Mitti Mussalmanki*", that is, "the clay of a Mussalman." His words have been wrongly reported to you.'

The Emperor was pleased at this reply. He gave Sri Ram Rai a jagir in the Doon valley. Guru Har Rai was soon informed of what his son had done. The Guru was greatly pained to hear of his son's lack of truth and courage. He said, 'Ram Rai is not fit for Guruship He should not show his face to me.'

So, Guru Har Rai made up his mind that his younger son, Sri Har Krishan, would be the Guru after him.

## XIV

### GURU HAR KRISHAN INVITED TO DELHI

Guru Har Krishan was a little over five years old when he became the Guru. But he began to do his duties in a very good manner. His elder brother, Sri Ram Rai, had wanted to become the Guru after his father, Guru Har Rai. But that Guru had declared him to be unfit for Guruship. Sri Ram Rai did not accept his father's decision. He decided to ignore it. He called himself the Guru. He sent his men in all directions. He said to them, 'Make it known everywhere that I am the Guru.' But the Sikhs knew of Guru Har Rai's decision. They refused to accept Sri Ram Rai as the Guru.

Sri Ram Rai was much disappointed. But he did not lose hope. He did not give up his plan to get the Guruship. He decided to place his case before Emperor Aurangzeb. He knew that the Emperor was pleased with him. Hence, he hoped that he would decide in his favour.

He met the Emperor. He said to him, 'The Guruship was my right. But my father passed it on to my younger brother. Help me to get back my right.'

Aurangzeb decided to send for Guru Har Krishan. He called Raja Jai Singh of Ambar and

said to him, 'Go to Kiratpur or send someone there. Bring Guru Har Krishan to Delhi. I must hear him before deciding Ram Rai's case.'

Sri Ram Rai was delighted on hearing Aurangzeb's orders to summon the Guru. He said to himself, 'Now I shall surely succeed. If my brother disobeys the Emperor, the Emperor will send an army to destroy him. If he obeys the Emperor, he will be disobeying our father's orders to him. He will become a greater sinner than I. The Sikhs will rise against him. If he runs away in fear, I shall go and occupy his place.'

Raja Jai Singh had often heard the Guru's praises. He was eager to see and hear him. The Sikhs of Delhi also urged him to invite the Guru. They said to him, 'Inform the Guru that not the Emperor only, but the Sikhs of Delhi also, are eager to see him.'

The Raja sent a high officer to Kiratpur. He was told to invite the Guru to Delhi. He was to treat him with great respect. The officer arrived at the Guru's darbar. He delivered Raja Jai Singh's message to the Guru. The Guru knew that his brother had prevailed upon Aurangzeb to summon him. He told the officer that he would give a reply on the morrow.

At night, the Guru's mother said to him, 'What advice should I give you ? Your elder brother is very clever and cunning. He is your enemy. The

Emperor is pleased with him. He may be planning to harm you.'

The Guru replied, 'Mother dear, don't have any doubts or fears. All will happen as God has decided. What can any man do against His Will or Order ? God will help me. My father told me not to see Aurangzeb. I shall obey my father. I will not see the Emperor.'

Next day the Guru sent for the officer and said, 'I cannot meet the Emperor. Such was my father's last desire. If your Raja and the Sikhs of Delhi want to see me, I shall go to them. But if the Raja wants me to see the Emperor, I must decline the invitation.' The officer said, 'The Raja has promised to invite you to Delhi. He has not promised to take you to the Emperor. Still, I shall write to Raja Sahib and get exact information.'

The Raja's reply was soon received. He said, 'The Sikhs of Delhi and I request you to come to Delhi, so that we may see you. As regards the Emperor, you may or may not see him, as you like. Nobody will force you to act against your wishes. You will be my guest and stay with me.'

On hearing this, the Guru said, 'That is all right. I will go to meet the Raja and the Sikhs of Delhi. I shall start the day after tomorrow.'

## XV

### ON THE WAY TO DELHI

Guru Har Krishan's elder brother, Sri Ram Rai, made an application to Emperor Aurangzeb. In it he said that the Guruship was his right. But it had been unjustly passed on to his younger brother. Aurangzeb decided to see and hear Guru Har Krishan, before passing orders on Sri Ram Rai's application. He, therefore, desired Raja Jai Singh to call the Guru to Delhi. The Guru was unwilling to go. He had been advised by his father not to see the Emperor. He did not want to act against his father's advice or orders. But Raja Jai Singh removed the difficulty. He said to the Guru, 'I humbly beg to invite you to my house. Come to my bungalow. Be my honoured guest. The Sikhs of Delhi are thirsting to see you. You may or may not see the Emperor. Nobody will force you to see him.'

The Guru accepted the Raja's invitation. He set out for Delhi. His mother decided to go with him. A large number of Sikhs also started with them. Many more joined on the way, every day. Some of them had come from distant places to see the Guru. He met them all with kind affection. He

told them of God and His kindness. He talked to them of their duty to God, their duty to their own selves, and their duty to God's children. He explained to them the main principles of Guru Nanak's religion. He urged them to live and act as Guru Nanak had shown them to do. Among them there were many suffering from this or that disease. He blessed them. He prayed for them. They were cured.

After a time, the Guru and his party reached the village of Panjokhra, near Ambala. The Guru decided that the large number of Sikhs should not go further. He drew a line on the ground and said, 'No Sikh should cross this line.' They all came to a halt. The Guru bade them farewell. He said to them, 'If any Sikh desires to see me, let him stand here and pray. His wishes will be granted.' There is now a gurdwara on the spot in memory of the Guru's visit.

The Guru then started on his journey to Delhi. His mother and a few chosen Sikhs went with him; for all others had gone back.

While the Guru and his party were at Panjokhra, a Sikh came and said to the Guru, 'In a place nearby, there lives a Brahmin. He is very proud. He asked me your name. I told him that your name is Sri Har Krishan. Hearing this, he became very angry. He said, "The god Sri Krishan gave us the teachings contained in the Bhagwadgita. Your

Guru calls himself Sri Har Krishan. Now, Har is a name of God. So it would seem that he thinks himself to be superior to Sri Krishan. If he thinks that way, let him discuss the Gita and its meanings with me." O true Guru, his pride should be humbled.'

The Guru agreed to let the Brahmin come to him. The Sikh went and called the Brahmin. The Brahmin came. He did not salute or bow to the Guru. He sat down with a proud look on his face. Then he said, 'You call yourself Sri Har Krishan. You ought to be greater than god Sri Krishan. He gave us the Gita. I would like you to explain and discuss the Gita with me.'

The Guru said, 'With God's grace, any Sikh, any man in the street can do that. Go and bring some simple, ignorant villager. He will discuss the Gita and other books with you. When you have defeated him, I shall speak to you.'

The Brahmin went away. Soon he came back with an ignorant water-carrier called Chhajju. The latter stood staring at the Guru. The Guru placed the end of his stick on Chhajju's head. He looked him full in the face. Then he said to the Brahmin, 'Chhajju has become a greater scholar than you. You may discuss the Gita and other religious books with him.'

The Brahmin and the water-carrier began the

discussion. The water-carrier gave such replies that the Brahmin became speechless.

The Brahmin admitted defeat. His pride of learning left him. He fell at the Guru's feet. He begged forgiveness for his rude and proud behaviour. He said, 'I see that you are holy god Krishan himself. You are even greater than he. O true King, make me your Sikh.'

The Guru accepted his prayer. He explained to him the three golden rules of life preached by Guru Nanak, namely—'ever to remember God, to earn one's livings with honest labour, and to share one's earnings with the needy.' Above all, added the Guru, 'Be sweet and humble in your dealings with others. Never let pride enter your heart. Sweet humility is the essence of all virtues. It never fails to win.'

After this, the Guru started towards Delhi. He reached there in due course.



The Emperor sent his son to meet Guru Har Krishan.

## XVI

### GURU HAR KRISHAN IN DELHI

When Guru Har Krishan reached Delhi, Raja Jai Singh went forth bare-footed to receive him. He took him to his own bungalow. There he made every arrangement for the Guru's comfort. At the place now stands the grand Gurdwara called Bangla Sahib.

Emperor Aurangzeb wished very much to see the Guru. He conveyed this wish of his to the Guru through a special messenger. Thereupon, the Guru desired Raja Jai Singh to speak to the Emperor on this point. He said to the Raja, 'You know my father's last words to me. I cannot go against them. I cannot see the Emperor. Persuade him not to insist on seeing me.'

The Raja succeeded in persuading the Emperor to accept the Guru's wishes. The Emperor sent a son of his to meet and talk with the Guru. The prince said to the Guru, 'Your elder brother, Ram Rai, has made a complaint against you. He says that the Guruship was his right. It has been unjustly made over to you. What have you to say about that matter? The Emperor wants to know that before deciding the matter.'

The Guru replied, 'The Guruship is not a jagir. It is not a form of worldly property. No one can claim it as a matter of right. It goes to the fittest person. The departing Guru makes the selection. His election is final. No one can question it. Guru Nanak, Guru Angad, and Guru Amar Das rejected their own sons. They chose their best Sikhs to occupy the Guru's seat after them. Guru Ram Das chose his younger son to be the Guru after him. Guru Har Gobind left out his sons and selected his younger grandson to be the Guru. Similarly, my father chose me, and not my elder brother, for the Guruship. His choice cannot be questioned. The Emperor should not interfere in this matter. It is a domestic matter of the Sikh Gurus.'

On hearing this, the prince said, 'I fully agree with you. I shall explain the whole matter to the Emperor. He will not trouble you any more. Ram Rai's claim is false. His complaint will be dismissed.'

Crowds of Sikhs came, every day, to see and pay respects to the Guru. It so happened that a severe form of cholera broke out in Delhi. Many died of cholera everyday. People prayed to the Guru to save them. The Guru sent for a jug of water. He touched it with his hands and toes. He said a short prayer. Then he said, 'Mix this water with the water in the reservoir. Everyone who takes a sip of it will be cured.'

This was done. All who took sips of the water, got rid of cholera.

The Emperor wanted to test the Guru's intelligence and spiritual powers. He desired Raja Jai Singh to do so in some manner. The Raja promised to try. He and his head queen made a plan. She was to dress herself as a maid-servant. So dressed, she was to sit among her maid-servants, behind the other queens. Some other women were also to dress themselves as queens and sit among them. The Guru was to be invited. If he recognized the head queen, it would be a proof of his spiritual powers.

Raja Jai Singh went to the Guru. He said, 'My queens are very eager to see you. The head queen is particularly eager to do so. Do kindly go with me.' The Guru guessed the Raja's plan. He did not like to make a show of his spiritual powers in this way. But the Raja begged him, again and again, to accept the invitation. The Guru agreed. He went with the Raja.

On reaching the Raja's palace, the Guru saw the queens and maid-servants ready to receive him. The Guru touched the front queen with his stick and said, 'You are not the head queen !' In this way, he touched the other ladies dressed as queens. He rejected them all. Then he went among the maid-servants. The head queen was among them, dressed like them. The Guru went up to her. He

touched her with the end of his stick and said,  
'Here is the head queen.'

The Emperor was informed of the success of the plan. He said, 'I admit that the Guru is what his followers believe him to be. He is the rightful Guru. His father's choice of him was wholly right. Ram Rai's claim is false. It is dismissed. Guru Har Krishan may return to his place, at his sweet pleasure.'

## XVII

### "BABA BAKALE"

While Guru Har Krishan was staying in Delhi he had an attack of small-pox. The attack was very severe. The Guru felt that the end of his life on earth was near. He made ready to go. His Sikhs asked him who was to be the Guru after him. He called for five *paise* and a coconut. He took them in his hands. He waved his hands in the air, round and round, three times. Then he said, 'Baba Bakale'. These were his last words. They meant that the next Guru was at the village of Bakala near Amritsar.

Soon afterwards, the Guru departed from the world. His body was cremated on the banks of the Jamuna. At that place now stands the Gurdwara Bala Sahib.

The Guru's relatives heard of his last words. The words did not clearly say who was to be the Guru after him. The Guru's greedy relatives took advantage of this fact. They flocked to the village Bakala. Each claimed to be the Guru. There were many such self-made Gurus like Dhir Mal.

By the way, Dhir Mal was the elder brother of Guru Har Rai and a grandson of Guru Har Gobind.

He was disloyal to the Guru. He had gone over to the Guru's enemy even during the lifetime of Guru Har Gobind. Hence, he had not been selected for the Guruship. But he had felt, all along, that he should have been selected for the Guruship instead of his younger brother, Guru Har Rai. Now he came forward in the field to claim the Guruship. We shall learn more about him later.

As usual, Sikhs from far and near came to see the Guru. They, too, had heard of Guru Har Krishan's last words. So they came to Bakala. They found there many persons claiming to be the Guru. These self-made Gurus took the Sikhs' offerings by deceit or force. The Sikhs were unable to discover the real Guru. They were greatly puzzled and very unhappy.

This state of things lasted for about a year. Then an event occurred which ended all doubts. It led to the discovery of the real Guru. It happened as stated below :

There was a Sikh named Makhan Shah Lubana. He was a trader, doing business in the Deccan. A ship full of his goods was once sailing on the sea. A severe storm began to blow. The ship began to sink. All efforts to save it seemed to be of no avail. Makhan Shah folded his hands and cried out, 'O Guru Nanak, save my ship from sinking. I shall make thee an offering of five hundred gold *mohars*, if my ship reaches the shore in safety.'

His prayer was granted. His ship reached the shore in safety. He came to the Panjab in order to make the offering. He had to make the offering to the Guru occupying Guru Nanak's *gaddi* or throne. He was told that the Guru was at Bakala. He went there. He found a large number of self-made Gurus. What was he to do ? Who was the real Guru ? To whom should he make the offering ?

He thought of a plan to test the self-made Gurus. He said to himself, 'I shall go to every one of them, one after the other. I shall make an offering of two gold *mohars* to each. The false ones will accept them readily. The true Guru will claim the offering actually promised by me. In this way, I shall end all doubts. The Sikhs will know the true Guru. They will be mightily pleased. The Guru will begin to guide, teach, and save the Sikhs.'

Makhan Shah acted on this plan. He went to each one of the self-made Gurus, one after the other. He placed before each two gold *mohars* as his offering. Each of them was pleased at the sight of the gold coins. Each began to praise himself to the skies. Each declared that he was the true Guru. 'All others,' he would add, 'are false. They are all pretenders.'

Makhan Shah visited all the self-made Gurus, one after the other. None of them claimed the offering actually promised. He came to the conclusion that none of them was the real Guru. He enquired

if there was any other person belonging to the Guru's family. He was told, 'There is another man. People call him Tegha. He is a son of Guru Har Gobind. His full name is Tegh Bahadur. He lives in silence, away from the world. He makes no claim to the Guruship.'

Makhan Shah went to the house pointed out to him. He met the Guru's mother. He requested for an interview with her son. She said, 'He spends his time in worship and prayer, all by himself. He does not like to be disturbed. I shall go and ask him. If he agrees to receive you, I shall take you to him.'

She went to her son. She told him of the visitor. He thought within himself, 'Makhan Shah has tested all the pretenders. He has not found the real Guru. If I continue to conceal myself, he will be disappointed. He will lose faith in the Guru. Moreover, the Sikhs feel lost and guideless. I must show myself and take up the duties assigned to me by Guru Har Krishan.'

So thinking, he requested his mother to let the visitor come in. Thus, Makhan Shah was permitted to see Guru Tegh Bahadur. He went in. He found the latter absorbed in thinking of God. He bowed and placed two gold *mohars* before him. The Guru opened his eyes. He saw the two gold coins placed before him. He saw Makhan Shah



*Makhan Shah discovers the Guru.*

seated near him. He said, 'Makhan Shah, you are breaking your promise. Why ? When your ship was sinking, you promised to make an offering of five hundred gold *mohars*. Your ship was saved. Now you are offering only two. How is it ?'

Makhan Shah was filled with joy. He fell at the Guru's feet. He placed five hundred gold *mohars* before the Guru. Then he rushed to the top of a house nearby. He waved a flag and shouted at the top of his voice, 'Congratulations, O dear Sikhs. I have found the true Guru. The true Guru has been found. He is living all alone. He has not claimed to be the Guru. But he is the Guru. Come and see him. Come, and beseech him to come out and guide us, his Sikhs.'

On hearing this, the Sikhs felt mightily pleased. There were great rejoicings among them. They gathered at the Guru's door. The Guru came out of his hiding place. He was duly seated on the Guru's throne.

## XVIII

### DHIR MAL'S FOUL DEEDS

Makhan Shah Lubana was able to discover the real Guru at Bakala. Guru Tegh Bahadur took his seat on the Guru's throne. He began to preach Guru Nanak's religion, vigorously. Sikhs from far and near came to pay their respects to the Guru. They made rich offerings to him.

Dhir Mal saw the many and valuable offerings made to Guru Tegh Bahadur. He began to burn with rage at the success of the Guru. He became terribly jealous. He made up his mind to put an end to the Guru's life. He desired one of his men to kill the Guru. That wicked man took about a score of men with him. They all fell upon the Guru. The man fired a shot at him. The bullet struck the Guru. He was wounded. But he showed no anger. He did not feel agitated. He remained perfectly calm. Dhir Mal's men packed and took away the Guru's property. The Guru did not mind the loss of his property. He remained calmly busy in thinking of God.

Makhan Shah heard of this happening. He decided to take revenge. He took a party of Sikhs with him. They all fell upon the house of Dhir

Mal. He closed his door. They forced it open. They took hold of the Guru's stolen property. They carried away some of Dhir Mal's own property also. This property included the Granth Sahib. They also caught the man who had fired at the Guru. They tied his hands behind his back. Thus bound, they took him to the Guru. The man fell at the Guru's feet and begged to be forgiven.

The Guru felt no anger against the man. He forgave him, most readily. He ordered his men to release him. Makhan Shah and others did not like this. They said that the man should not be allowed to go scot-free. They wanted him to be punished for his wicked deed. But the Guru was firm. He permitted his enemy to go away unharmed. He forgave him from the bottom of his heart.

Then he said to his Sikhs, 'I learn that you have brought away a lot of Dhir Mal's own property also. Return the whole of it to him.' The Sikhs did not like to do so. But they could not disobey the Guru. So they returned to Dhir Mal almost all his property. But they did not return the Granth Sahib. They thought that it was not his private property; it belonged to the Guru and his Sikhs.

The Guru saw that his Sikhs were filled with anger against his enemies. They were not inclined to forgive them. The Guru said to his Sikhs,

'Never let anger enter your hearts. Regard it as your enemy number one. In anger man loses his senses. He becomes mad. He loses the power to judge what is right and what is wrong. In anger he commits worst sins and foulest crimes. The angry man's life becomes like hell. Avoid being angry. Be ever kind, merciful and calm.'

'On the other hand,' added the Guru, 'forgiveness is a great and noble virtue. Never miss an opportunity to exercise forgiveness. Think not of taking revenge. Leave it all to God. Worship Him. Pray to Him. He will bless you.'

The Guru wanted to live in peace. But his enemies did not let him live in peace. Their enmity and jealousy went on increasing, day by day. He did not like to pay them in their own coin. So, he made up his mind to go away from his enemies. He decided to go to Kiratpur.

So determined, he set out for that place. His family and a large number of Sikhs were with him. Soon they reached near the river Beas. The Guru saw some of his men carrying the Granth Sahib. He was displeased at the sight. He said to them, 'I told you to return to Dhir Mal all his property. But I find that you have not returned the Granth Sahib. Why ?'

The Sikhs said, 'O true Guru, the Granth Sahib is not his private property. It belongs to the Guru. It belongs to his Sikhs. He should not get

it. That is why we did not give it back to him.  
Permit us to keep it as the Guru's property.'

But the Guru did not agree with them. He said, 'The sacred Book has been with him for long. Guru Har Gobind, Guru Har Rai, and Guru Har Krishan never wanted to get it from him. It must be returned to him.'

The Guru left the Book in a safe place in the dry bed of the river. He sent word to Dhir Mal to take it away from there. He did so. From that day the Book has remained with Dhir Mal's family at Kartarpur, Jullundur.

## XIX

### GURU TEGH BAHADUR'S EXTENSIVE TOURS

Guru Tegh Bahadur took up his duties as the ninth Guru in March 1666. At that time, Aurangzeb was the Emperor of India. Soon after becoming the Guru he founded Anandpur. The land needed for the purpose was purchased from the Raja of Kahlur.

Then he decided to make an extensive tour of the eastern provinces of India. He wanted to preach his faith among the people there. He visited important cities like Agra, Allahabad, Banaras, Gaya and Patna. Leaving his family at Patna, he went onwards to Bengal and Assam.

When in Assam, he received disturbing news from the Panjab. He decided to cut short his tour. He rushed back to the Panjab. Now, what was the disturbing news ? It was as given below.

We have seen how Aurangzeb had won the throne of Delhi. He had treated his father, brothers and their families in a most cruel and merciless manner. He could not be expected to behave kindly towards those who were not his kith and kin. Besides, he was a fanatic bigot. He thought that Islam, as he understood it, was

the only true religion in the world; that all other religions were false. He resolved that Islam should be the only religion in his empire.

But among the Muslims in his empire there were many who did not agree with him. They were pious and liberal-minded. They did not hate the non-Muslims. They wanted to be friends with them. They believed that Islam taught them to treat all human beings as their brothers. But Aurangzeb was cruel and narrow-minded. He did not like such pious and liberal-minded Muslims. He got them murdered.

Then he turned his attention to non-Muslims. He started compelling them to embrace Islam. In April 1669 he issued special and strict orders to the Governors of all provinces. He ordered them to destroy the temples and close the schools of the 'infidels'. Mosques were to be built on the sites of the temples. He also wanted them to make special efforts to compel the 'infidels' to become Muslims. The 'infidels' were to be told to choose between Islam and death. Those who did not accept Islam, were to be put to the sword. No mercy was to be shown to them.

Most of the 'infidels' or non-Muslims in Aurangzeb's empire were Hindus. So these efforts were mostly directed against them. But the Sikhs, too, were not spared. Their temples were also destroyed. Something more was done to create

difficulties for their Guru. In most towns and cities the Guru had his agents. They were called *masands*. They preached the Sikh faith. They collected the Sikhs' offerings and took them to the Guru. Aurangzeb ordered to Guru's *masands* to be driven out from the towns and cities.

This was the disturbing news received by the Guru in Assam. It made him sad. He said to himself, 'I must return to the Panjab. My people are in great distress. I must be among them. I must encourage them to bear all sufferings with brave cheerfulness. I must prepare them to die rather than give up their faith.'

Accordingly, leaving his family still at Patna, he rushed back to the Panjab. He arrived at Anandpur. But he did not stay there for long. He decided to make an extensive whirlwind tour of the Malwa and the southern part of the Panjab. He wanted to prepare the people for what was coming. He wanted to fire them with a firm resolve to suffer but not to yield. He went from place to place. He passed through the Malwa and then the southern Panjab. He visited countless places and spoke to countless people. What did he say to them ? Here is the substance of what he said.

'Look around and see what the Mughal rulers are doing. Throw away all fear. Get ready to suffer for your faith. Take a vow that you will

give up your life, but will not give up your faith. Prepare yourselves to fight the cruel people. Time will soon come when you will have to fight for the defence of your faith. Emperor Aurangzeb wants that Islam should be the only religion in his empire. He wants the non-Muslims to choose between Islam and death. You, too, may soon have to make that choice. Be ready to make the right choice. Prepare yourselves to face and fight the tyrants in defence of your *dharma*. God will help you. The Emperor will, I feel, turn his attention to me, sooner or later. He will issue orders for my arrest. He will tell me to choose between Islam and death. Need I tell you what choice I shall make ? He will torture me. He will get me murdered. That is certain to happen. But don't feel dejected or downcast. Don't give way to despair. I feel that after that happens, the path of peaceful activity and suffering will have to be given up. You know that after the martyrdom of Guru Arjan, his son and my father, Guru Har Gobind, had to change the Sikhs from saints to saints-soldiers. He fought four battles with the Mughals. He fought because he was attacked. He defeated the attackers everytime. Similarly, after my death, my son will take up arms. My father had told my mother that her grandson, that is, my son, will be a great warrior; that he would convert jackals into tigers, and sparrows into hawks. Get ready for that change.

**Get ready to fight and win under his leadership.'**

Aurangzeb was, at that time, at Hasan Abdal. You have already heard of that place. It was the same place where Guru Nanak had humbled Bawa Wali Qandhari. It lies between Rawalpindi and Kabul. He had gone there to quell the rebellion of the Pathans. His reporters sent him reports about Guru Tegh Bahadur's activities. They said, 'He is becoming very popular, powerful, and influential. He is going about the country with many thousand men at his back. He is collecting huge funds. If this process goes on unchecked, his power will increase. He might raise the standard of rebellion.'

As said above, the Emperor was then busy in quelling the Pathan rebellion. He had no time to make enquiries about the allegations made against the Guru. His fears were, no doubt, aroused but he took no immediate action, issued no orders. But some time after, he received another report against the Guru. Thereupon, he decided to act, to end the Guru's life and activities. What was that report ? We shall see that presently.

## XX

### **KASHMIRI PANDITS' PRAYER**

Kashmir is called the Paradise of India. The Mughal emperors were very fond of it. It was mostly peopled by Hindus. Aurangzeb was particularly eager to make Kashmir a purely Muslim province. Accordingly, he had issued special orders to the governor there for this purpose. The latter started to act in obedience to the Emperor's orders. In 1671, the Governor, Nawab Saif Khan, was transferred. His place was taken by Nawab Iftikhar Khan. This man was a zealous executor of Aurangzeb's policy towards the Hindus. He began to work with zeal to carry out that policy, to make Kashmir a cent per cent Muslim province. He began to make all-out efforts to finish off the Hindus in Kashmir. He told them to choose between Islam and death. Those who refused to accept Islam, were beheaded publicly.

After some time, Nawab Iftikhar Khan said to himself, 'The Pandits of Kashmir are very able, clever and learned. I should pay special attention to them. Their conversion will be a great gain to the Muslim world. Moreover, if they accept Islam, the lower-caste Hindus will follow their example.'

I shall not have to shed blood any more.'

He sent for the leading Pandits of Kashmir. He said to them, 'I have received specially urgent orders from the Emperor. He wants me to convert you or kill you. This has to be done without any delay. So you have to choose between Islam and death. And you have to make the choice without any delay. Go, think and decide. Let me know your decision tomorrow.'

The Kashmiri Pandits discussed the matter for a good part of the night. In the morning, they said to the governor, 'Give us six months' time to consider the matter.' He acceded to their request quite readily.

They went away. They and their people offered special prayers to their gods and goddesses. But all was in vain. One night, one of them went to bed after day-long prayers and discussion. His last prayer, when going to sleep, was, 'O God, give us light. Tell us what to do.' Soon, he heard a voice. It said, 'Go to Anandpur. Meet Guru Tegh Bahadur. Appeal to him for help and guidance. God has sent him to protect the Hindu religion. He is the Champion of the Hindus.'

He told his friends and companions of the voice that he had heard. They all said, 'The voice has given us the right advice. It was, no doubt, the voice of God Himself.' They decided to send a deputation to wait upon Guru Tegh Bahadur. The

deputation reached Anandpur. The members of the deputation presented themselves before the Guru. They informed him of the state of things in Kashmir. They informed him of the choice offered to them by the governor. They added, 'We have been given six months in which to make the choice. That period is about to end. Help, guide, and protect us, O Champion of the Hindus.'

The Pandits' tale made the Guru sad and thoughtful. He thought within himself, 'Something has to be done. But what should it be ?' At that moment his son, Sri Gobind Rai, came in. He saw that his father was sad and lost in thought. He said to his father, 'Why are you so sad and thoughtful today ? Who are these good people ? They seem to be lost in despair and gloom. What have they come for ? What have they been telling you ? What are you thinking about, dear ather ?'

The Guru replied, 'They are Pandits from Kashmir. They are face to face with a life-and-death problem. Their Muhammadan governor has told them to choose between Islam and death. They want neither this nor that. They have come to me for advice. It is a very serious problem. Our rulers are making a hell of our land. They are treating their Hindu subjects with utmost cruelty. Their hearts have become frozen. They are no longer human. They have come to behave like wild, fierce beasts. Their frozen, stony hearts



'For that sacrifice who can be fitter and more worthy than you,  
dear father.'

have to be melted and softened. Their inhuman behaviour has to be made human. There seems to be only one way to do all this. Some great holy man should sacrifice himself. How and where to find such a one, is the question before me ? That is the problem which has made me sad and lost in thought. May God guide and help me !'

His son was hardly eight years of age then. He replied at once, 'For that sacrifice, dear father, who can be fitter and more worthy than you ?' The Guru accepted his son's suggestion. He said to the Pandits of Kashmir, 'Go and say to the governor, "Guru Tegh Bahadur is our guide and leader. First make him a Mussulman. We shall follow his example." I am sure that he will agree. Leave the rest to me. I shall act as directed by the Lord above.'

The Pandits thanked the Guru. They bowed to him, and left for their province.

## XXI

### GURU TEGH BAHADUR'S MARTYRDOM

The Kashmiri Pandits thanked the Guru for his sympathy and guidance, and for his promise to sacrifice his life in order to save them. They went to the governor. They said to him what the Guru had told them to say. The governor lost no time in reporting the whole matter to the Emperor at Hasan Abdal. He sought his further orders.

The Emperor was filled with rage. He burst out, 'He has dared to express sympathy with the infidel Brahmans of Kashmir. He has chosen to stand in my way. I cannot brook this. He must die.'

He at once issued an order to the governor of Lahore. In it he said, 'Have the Guru arrested, fettered, and detained in prison. Report to me when that has been effected. Then wait for further orders.' The governor of Lahore passed on the order to the *faujdar* of Sarhind, Dilawar Khan; for Anandpur was in the territory under him. Dilawar Khan, in turn, asked the circle *kotwal* of Ropar, Noor Muhammad Khan Mirza, to arrest the Guru; for Anandpur was in his *ilaqa*.

Now, the Guru was moving about from place to place accompanied by thousands of Sikhs. The

*kotwal* knew this. He said to himself, 'I should not try to arrest him when he has a large number of Sikhs with him. They are sure to create trouble. I must wait till I can find him to be alone or accompanied by only a few companions.' He sent his men to watch the Guru's movements. He said to them, 'Inform me when the Guru is alone or has only a few companions with him.'

The *kotwal*, Noor Muhammad Khan Mirza, thus waited for a suitable opportunity to arrest the Guru. He did not have to wait long. The Guru, accompanied by a few Sikhs, left Anandpur for another tour. That was in July 1675. He arrived at the village of Malikpur Rangharan near Ropar. He wanted to cross the Satluj for his onward journey. The *kotwal's* reporters reported to him accordingly. He acted at once. He reached Malikpur Rangharan, with a strong force of police. He called upon the Ranghars of the village to help him. The Ranghars were Muhammadans. They readily agreed to help the *kotwal*. The Jats of the village tried to prevent the arrest. But they were too few and much weaker than the *kotwal's* party. The police and the local Ranghars were too many and too strong for them. So the Guru and his companions were arrested.

The *kotwal* sent the Guru and his companions to Sarhind. There he was fettered, chained, and detained in prison. The *faujdar* of Sarhind

reported the Guru's arrest to the Emperor's officers at Delhi. He asked them what was to be done to the Guru. The Guru was kept at Sarhind for three months and a half. All the time he was kept fettered, chained and detained in prison; for such were the Emperor's orders. Then a *parwana* was received from Delhi. The *faujdar* was told to despatch the Guru to Delhi. Accordingly, the Guru was despatched to the capital, shut up in an iron cage. The Emperor was informed of all this. His further orders were sought about what was to be done to the Guru.

At Delhi, too, the Guru was kept fettered, chained, and shut up in an iron cage. The Subedar of Delhi and the royal Qazi did their utmost to persuade him to be converted to Islam. He refused to give up his faith. They began to torture him most cruelly. He remained firm, calm and unshaken. Then they killed his companions before his very eyes. They thought that the sight would make him change his mind. Bhai Mati Das was bound between two pillars and cut down with a saw. Bhai Dayal Das was boiled to death in a cauldron of boiling water. Bhai Sati Das was wrapped in cotton. Oil was poured on the cotton. It was then set on fire. He was thus roasted alive. These disciples of the Guru accepted and bore all this most cheerfully. They sacrificed their lives for their faith. They died with God

on their lips and their eyes fixed on the Guru.

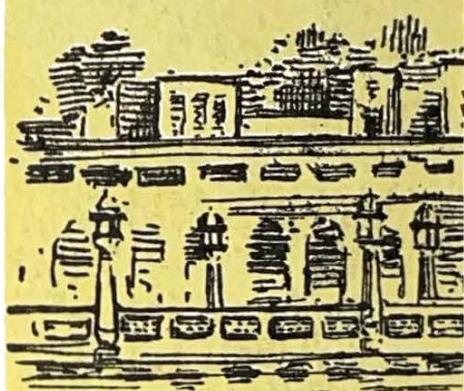
By then the Emperor's orders were received about what was to be done to the Guru. He told his officers to say to the Guru, 'If you claim to be a true guru, a true prophet, sent by God to preach a religion, you should show some miracles to support your claim. Men sent by God as his prophets have the power to perform miracles. If you are a true Guru or prophet, you should be able to perform miracles. If you do not or cannot do so, you must accept Islam. If you refuse to do that you will be executed.'

The Emperor's men informed the Guru of the choices offered to him by the Emperor. The Guru replied, 'True men of God never perform miracles in order to save themselves from sufferings or to escape death. They don't perform miracles to prove their greatness, either. I will not show any miracles. I will not accept Islam. Do with me as you like.'

After the Guru had thus declared his decision, he was led out of his cage to the open place called Chandni Chowk. There he was beheaded. His head was cut off. This was done publicly, in the presence of a crowd of people. At the place where Guru Tegh Bahadur was beheaded, stands the gurdwara called Sis Ganj. His body was not permitted to be taken away. It was publicly exposed in the streets of Delhi. Strong guards were placed to prevent its being taken away.

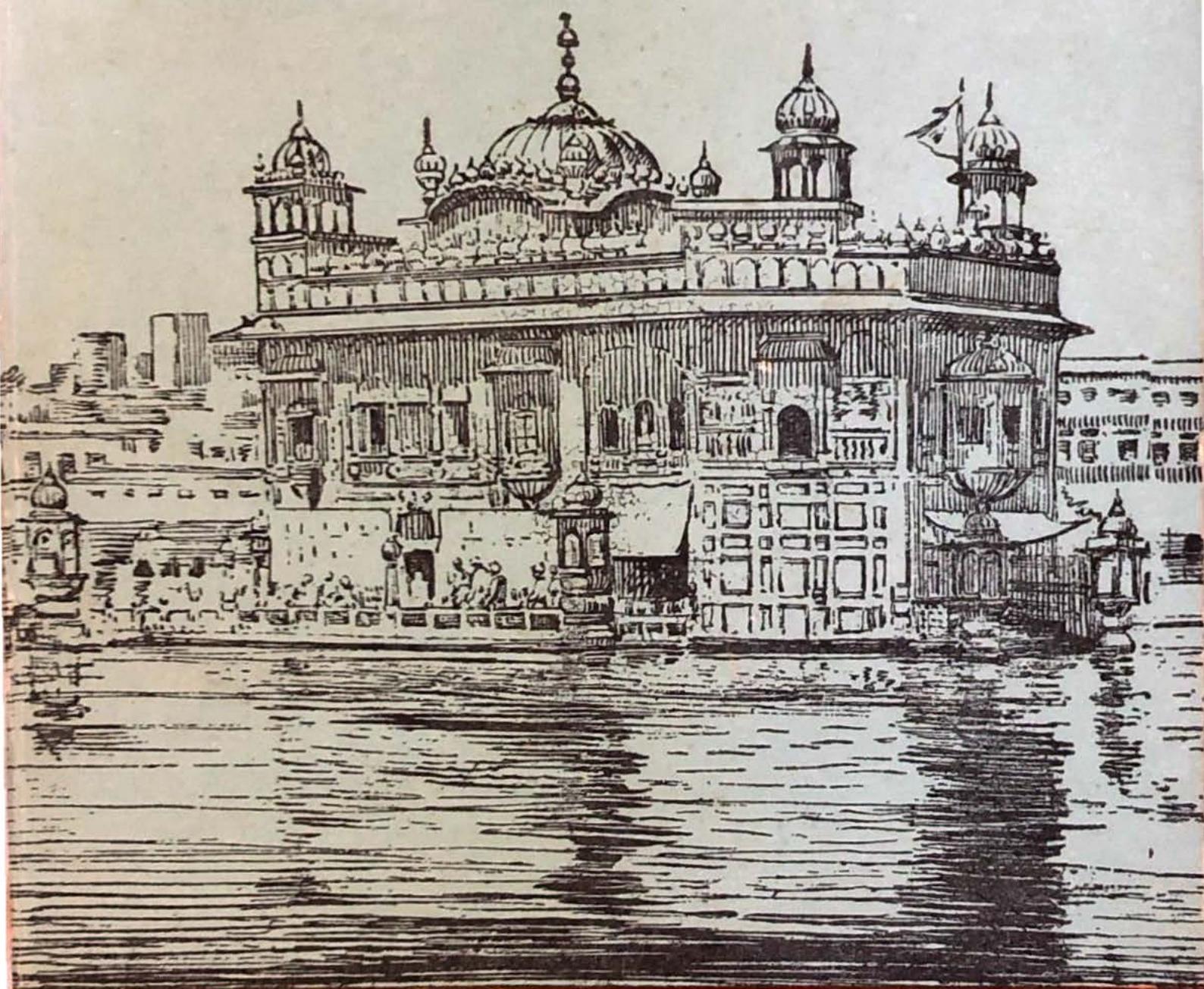
At night, however, a daring Sikh managed to approach the place secretly. The guards did not notice him. He was a Ranghreta Sikh belonging to the sweeper class. His name was Bhai Jaita. He succeeded in taking possession of the Guru's head. He hurried with it to Anandpur. There he presented it to Guru Tegh Bahadur's son, Guru Gobind Singh. It was cremated there with due rites. At the place of its cremation stands a gurdwara called Sis Ganj Anandpur.

Next day, a severe duststorm began to blow. A daring Lubana Sikh decided to take advantage of this severe, blinding storm. His name was Lakhi Shah. He decided to take away Guru Tegh Bahadur's headless body during the duststorm. He was successful. He took the headless body to his hut outside the city. He made a heap of firewood inside his hut. He placed the Guru's body on that heap of firewood. He covered it with more firewood. Then he set fire to his hut. He made it known that his hut had caught fire by accident. Thus the Guru's body was cremated by Lakhi Shah. A grand gurdwara stands at the place. It is called Rakab Ganj.



STORIES  
from  
SIKH HISTORY

BOOK-IV



Hemkunt Press

# **STORIES FROM SIKH HISTORY**

**BOOK IV**

**(GURU GOBIND SINGH)**

by

**KARTAR SINGH M.A.**

and

**GURDIAL SINGH DHILLON**

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## FOREWORD

Moral and religious instruction, I am glad to find, is now being rehabilitated in our schools. Our country is secular, it is true, but there is no denying the fact that religious and moral education has a very useful function to serve. It is in this context that the Sri Prakasa Committee recommended moral instruction at the School level in order to develop the personality of students.

Modern psychology has emphasised that if the child is given proper guidance at his formative stage it will greatly help integrate his personality. The example of the teacher and his relations with students leave a deep impression on the minds of students. Moral instruction, I feel, is better given by example than by precept.

The great figures of the past specially the heroes of history have shown mankind how to fight successfully against evil and face the challenges from time to time. One of the great heroes of Indian history is Guru Gobind Singh. Through his example, he challenged superstition, inertia, tyranny and bigotry. His life is a beacon-light which gives inspiration to all who seek guidance in the path of truth and righteous action.

The youth of today, more than any other section of society, is at the cross-roads. School students are dazed by the march of exciting events and the great tensions

of the modern world. Science may throw light on the physical world, but it is only the teachings of great saints and sages which offer a glimpse into the spiritual world. Any educational system which does not take into account the moral development of the students will remain inadequate and ineffective. I am glad to know that thoughtful educationists are devoting their attention to the moral education of the young. In this context, the efforts of Principal G. S. Dhillon, and Prof. Kartar Singh deserve all appreciation. In this book for children, are presented a number of stories from the life of Guru Gobind Singh in a broad and vivid manner. The pictures and sketches given therein, I am sure, will create a lasting impression on their minds. I sincerely hope that the series of stories from Sikh History which they have planned will go a long way in moulding the lives of the young Indian students.

*January 14, 1972*

GANDA SINGH

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## DETAILS ABOUT THE SIKH GURUS OR PROPHETS

<i>S. No.</i>	<i>Name of the Guru</i>	<i>Name of father and mother</i>	<i>Birth Place</i>	<i>Birth—Death</i>	<i>Period of Guruship</i>	<i>Guruship assumed at the age of</i>	<i>Contemporary Muslim Emperor</i>
1.	Guru Nanak (Bedi)	Mehta Kalu Mata Tripta	Talawandi or Nankana Sahib	1469—1539 (70 yrs.)	1469—1539 (70 yrs.)		Babar (1483—1530)
2.	Guru Angad (Trehan)	Pheru Mata Daya Kaur	Matte'di Sarai Muktsar	1504—1552 (48 yrs.)	1539—1552 (13 yrs.)	35 years	Humayun (1530—1556)
3.	Guru Amar Das (Bhalla)	Tej Bhan Mata Sulakhni	Basarka near Amritsar	1479—1574 (95 yrs.)	1552—1574 (22 yrs.)	73 years	Akbar (1556—1605)
4.	Guru Ram Das (Sodhi)	Guru Amar Das Mata Mansa Devi	Lahore	1534—1581 (47 yrs.)	1574—1581 (7 yrs.)	40 years	—Do—
5.	Guru Arjan Dev (Sodhi)	Guru Ram Das Mata Bhani	Goindwal	1563—1606 (43 yrs.)	1581—1606 (25 yrs.)	18 years	Jahangir (1606—1628)
6.	Guru Har Gobind (Sodhi)	Guru Arjan Dev Mata Ganga	Wadali near Amritsar	1595—1664 (49 yrs.)	1606—1644 (38 yrs.)	11 years	—Do—
7.	Guru Har Rai (Sodhi)	Baba Gur Ditta Mata Nihal Kaur	Kiratpur	1630—1661 (31 yrs.)	1644—1661 (17 years)	14 years	Shah Jahan (1628—1658)
8.	Guru Har Krishan (Sodhi)	Guru Har Rai Mata Kishan Kaur	Kiratpur	1656—1664 (8 yrs.)	1661—1664 (3 yrs.)	5 years	Aurangzeb (1658—1707)
9.	Guru Teg Bahadur (Sodhi)	Guru Hargobind Mata Nanaki	Amritsar	1621—1675 (54 yrs.)	1664—1675 (11 years)	43 years	—Do—
10.	Guru Gobind Singh (Sodhi)	Guru Teg Bahadur Mata Gujri	Patna	1666—1708 (42 yrs.)	1675—1708 (33 yrs.)	9 years	Bahadur Shah (1707)

# Guru Gobind Singh

## 1

### CHILDHOOD AT PATNA

Guru Gobind Singh was the tenth Guru of the Sikhs. He was born at Patna, now the capital of Bihar State, in December 1666 A. D. His father, Guru Teg Bahadur, had gone thither on a long tour. What was the object of his tour? His object was to persuade the people to follow the path of Love, Service and Devotion, as preached by Guru Nanak. He had taken his family with him. He was accompanied by a large number of his followers, too. On reaching Patna, he made arrangements for his family's stay there. Leaving his family at Patna, he went further east to visit Bengal and Assam. He was in Assam at the time of his only son's birth.

The tenth Guru's mother, Mata Gujri, named him Gobind Rai. Some people say that his first name was Gobind Das. We shall see later how he came to be called Gobind Singh.

The first five or six years of his life were spent in the city of his birth. During these years he gave clear signs of the sort of life he was to lead later.

He was active and full of mirth. He loved to play the soldier. He had an army of playmates at his heels. They all looked upon him as their leader. Usually, he used to divide them into two groups. He placed himself at the head of one of the groups. The other group had a captain of their choice. He made the two groups engage in games and matches requiring skill, courage, strength and patience.

He was fearless and brave. One day he was playing with his friends in a part of the city. The chief officer or Nawab of Patna came that way. The Nawab's servants called upon the boys to salute the Nawab. Hearing this, Sri Gobind Rai said to his comrades, 'No, brothers, we are not going to salute or say *salam* to the Nawab. We shall all make faces at him. We shall jeer at him. Be ready.' As the Nawab approached, all the boys made faces at him. They clapped their hands in fun. The Nawab's servants tried to catch them. But they all ran away, shouting, clapping and laughing.

Sri Gobind Rai was a charming child. His conduct and manners won him a large number of admirers. He came to be loved by many—both young and old, rich and poor, learned and simple, Hindus and Muslims. Among his Hindu admirers was a learned Brahmin named Pandit Shiv Das. Raja Fateh Chand Maini and his wife also loved and admired him. Among his Muslim admirers of Patna were two brothers named Nawab Rahim

Bakhsh and Nawab Karim Bakhsh. They made an offering of a village and two gardens to the charming child.

Another Muslim admirer of his was Pir Bhikhan Shah. He was a Sayyid. He lived at the village Thaska in the district of Karnal, now in Haryana. On the day when Guru Gobind Rai was born at Patna, the Pir did something unusual for a Muslim. He looked towards the east, in the direction of Patna. Then he made a deep and respectful bow. This act was queer for a Muhammedan. As we know, Muhammedans bow to the west, in the direction of Mecca. His disciples and servants felt surprised. They asked him why he had bowed to the east. The Pir replied, 'Far away in the east is a city named Patna. In that city God has appeared in human form. He is to perform wonders. He will destroy the evil and wicked people. He will fight against sin, evil and false religion. He will champion the cause of virtue and true religion. I have bowed to God in that human form. I am going to that sacred city in order to get a sight of Him. The sight will be a blessing for me.'

Pir Bhikhan Shah set out for Patna. He had some disciples and servants with him. In due course, he arrived at that city. He went to the house where Sri Gobind Rai then lived. He bowed and sat near the door of that house. He was asked what he wanted; why he sat there in that way. He replied, 'I come from a far off place. I have come to have a look at

the holy child born and living in this house. He is God in human form.'

Mata Gujri was informed of the fakir at her door. She was told what he wanted. At first she hesitated a bit. She made some excuses to put him off. But the Pir said, 'I have travelled hundreds of miles to have a look at the holy child. I will not move from this place until my wish is granted. I will neither eat nor drink anything till then.'

His wish had to be granted at last. As soon as he saw the child, he made a deep, respectful bow. He had with him two earthen pots. They contained sweetmeat. One of them had been bought from the shop of a Hindu confectioner. The other had been bought from a Muhammedan confectioner's shop. The Pir placed the two pots before Sri Gobind Rai. Having done that, he sat with hands folded and eyes fixed on the holy child. Sri Gobind Rai covered one of the pots with his left hand. He covered the other pot with his right hand. Then he smiled and looked at the Pir. At this Pir Bhikhan Shah made a longer and deeper bow.

The Pir's disciples who had come with him said to him, 'O Pir, we are unable to understand what we have seen. Kindly explain it to us.' The Pir replied, 'I wanted to know whether this man of God or God-in-man will favour the Hindus or the Musalmans. I had said to myself, "If he is to favour the Hindus, he will put his hand on the pot got from



*The Pir placed the two pots before Sri Gobind Rai (page 10)*

the Hindu shop. If he is to favour the Muslims, he will put his hand on the pot got from the Muslim shop." He has read my thoughts. He has covered both the pots. It means that both Hindus and Muhammedans will be equally dear to him. He will help the Hindus, if they need his help. He will help the Muslims if they are in need of his help. This has gladdened my heart immensely.'

The Pir then returned to his home in the Panjab. He remained a loving admirer of Guru Gobind Singh all through his life.

## 2

**RAJA RATAN RAI OF ASSAM**

During his tour to the east Guru Teg Bahadur visited Assam. Raja Ram of Assam had no son. He and his queen were very sad on that account. They heard of the Guru's arrival. They heard his praises from all who had seen him. They decided to see the Guru. They felt sure that he could grant them the gift of a son. They came to Guru Teg Bahadur. They said to him, 'O true Guru, you grant the wishes of all your devotees. Be pleased to grant our wish, too. Please grant us the boon of a son.'

Guru Teg Bahadur blessed the couple. He prayed for them. He said to them, 'God will grant your wish. You will get a son. Pray to him every day, from the core of your hearts.'

God heard their prayers. He granted their wish. A son was born to them in due course. They called him Ratan Rai. Raja Ram died when the prince was only seven years old. When Ratan Rai became twelve years of age, he said one day to his mother, 'You have often told me that Guru Teg Bahadur



*The elephant wiped the Guru's feet.*

got you the gift of a son. He blessed you. He prayed for you. Because of those blessings and prayers I was born to you. How good and gracious he was ! How lucky you were to meet him ! How lucky should I have been to see him ! But you tell me that he is no more in this world. You tell me that he laid down his life in order to save the Hindu religion. How great and noble he was! His son, Guru Gobind Rai now occupies his seat. I would like very much to have a sight of him. Let us go.'

His mother agreed most readily and joyfully. Preparations were made for the long journey to Anandpur. The prince and his mother got ready a number of offerings to be made to the Guru. The prince felt very glad to behold them. He praised them to his mother. She said to him, 'Dear son, be careful. Don't let pride enter your heart. Don't begin to feel proud to think that you are making such good and costly presents. All that we have is God's gift. All of it belongs to the Guru and God. We are going to offer him some out of all that they have granted to us. The Guru is pleased with what is offered with humility and love. Even a small present so offered is dear to him. Most costly presents made with pride and self-praise are not pleasing to him. Be humble, therefore. Pray that all these offerings be accepted by the Guru.

Raja Ratan Rai set out for Anandpur. He was accompanied by his mother and several of his ministers

and *darbaris*. In due course they reached the sacred city. They were given a hearty welcome. The Raja offered his presents to the Guru. They consisted of the following : five strong, beautiful horses with golden trappings ; a very small but very intelligent elephant; a weapon out of which five sorts of arms could be made—a pistol, a sword, a lance, a dagger and a club; a throne from which puppets could be made to come out and play *chaupar*; a drinking cup of great value ; and several costly and beautiful jewels and dresses.

After presenting these offerings to the Guru, Raja Ratan Rai said, ‘O true Guru, be pleased to accept these humble offerings. They are a very little part of what you and God have conferred on us. Be pleased further to grant me the gift of the Sikh faith and sincerity.’ The Guru granted all his desires. The Raja felt immensely pleased.

The Raja then proceeded to show the excellence and advantages of his presents. First of all, he showed how five sorts of arms could be made from the weapon presented by him. It was a pistol to begin with. The Raja pressed a spring attached to the weapons. It took the form of a sword. He pressed the spring again. The weapon changed into a lance. He pressed the spring once more. The weapon became a dagger. He pressed the spring again. The weapon took the form of a club. When the spring was pressed once more, the weapon was again a pistol.

The Raja then placed the throne before the Guru. It was very beautiful. He pressed a spring attached to it. At once puppets came out of the throne. They began to play *chaupar*. The Raja then presented the elephant. He was small but very intelligent. He was black as coal. A white stripe stretched from the tip of his trunk, along the forehead and back, right to the end of his tail. The Raja caused the elephant to wipe the Guru's shoes and place them in order for him. The Raja then requested the Guru to discharge an arrow. As he did so, the elephant went running after it, and brought it back. The animal then held a jug of water with which the Guru's feet were washed. Then he wiped them with a towel. At the Raja's word of command, the elephant took a *chauri* and waved it over the Guru. At night, the elephant took two lighted torches in his trunk. In this way, he lighted the path of the Guru and the Raja. The Raja prayed that the elephant should ever remain in the service of the Guru alone.

The Raja stayed at Anandpur for about five months. He was of about the same age as the Guru, whose company charmed him. He accompanied the Guru on his hunting trips. He wished to be ever in the Guru's presence. But he had his duties at home. He had to leave. When he was ready to depart, the Guru said to him, 'True worship consists in doing one's duty honestly and diligently. At the same time, the inmost thoughts should be firmly fixed on God. A ruler should

regard all his subjects as his own children. He should be just and kind to them all. He should do his utmost to make them happy. If you do all this, God will be pleased with you. 'He will confer on you peace, happiness and glory. I shall be ever with you.'

The Guru gave the Raja suitable parting gifts. The Raja and his successors held the gifts in great respect.

## 3

**SAYYID BUDHU SHAH**

Nahan was a small hill State not very far from Anandpur. It is now a part of Himachal Pradesh. Its ruler at the time was Raja Medni Prakash. Once he invited Guru Gobind Singh to spend some time in his State. The Guru accepted the invitation. He went and put up his camp at the foot of the Nahan mountain. At the Raja's suggestion, the Guru constructed a fort in the Raja's country. He gave it the name of Paunta. He stayed there for quite a long time.

In Sadaura, about twenty five kilometres from Paunta, there lived a Sayyid fakir named Pir Budhu Shah. He had heard much about Guru Gobind Singh. He had longed to see him. Now he learnt that the Guru was staying quite near his place. He went to visit him. The Guru received him warmly and seated him by his own side. The Sayyid said, 'I am a sinner. I am terribly afraid of what may happen to me after death. Get me pardoned for my sins. Save me from God's wrath.'

The Guru replied, 'God is all mercy and forgiveness. I shall tell you the way to get pardon

for sins. Repent for your sins from the bottom of your heart. Resolve never to do wrong again. Keep busy in doing good deeds. Help all who need your help. Be humble and truthful. Always feel God to be watching all your actions. Feel Him to be knowing all your feelings, desires and thoughts. Think, feel and do nothing that may displease him. Ever remember Him and pray to Him for mercy and grace. If you live such a life, you need have no fears about your life after death.'

Sayyid Budhu Shah was delighted to hear these words. He bowed and promised to live and act as advised by the Guru. He stayed with the Guru for some time. During this time, the Guru gave him religious instruction suitable to his need and circumstances. The Sayyid Shah became a devotee of the Guru.

After a time, Sayyid Budhu Shah returned to his home in Sadaura. A few days later, five hundred Pathans in military uniform came to him. They said to him, 'Our profession is military service. We were employed in the army of Emperor Aurangzeb. We have been dismissed for a minor fault. Now no one is prepared to employ us. All are afraid of the Emperor. We have come to you for help. Find us service somewhere. We shall be faithful in our service. We shall not bring a bad name to you in any way.'

Sayyid Budhu Shah decided to help them. He knew that Guru Gobind Singh had employed a large number of Muhammedans in his army. He decided to request him to enlist the Pathans also. He took them to the Guru. He told him their story. He recommended them for enlistment in the Guru's army. The Guru agreed. He took them into his service. He fixed a salary of five rupees a day for each officer and one rupee a day for each soldier. The five officers' names were : Haiyat Khan, Dale Khan, Nijabat Khan, Umre Khan and Bhikhan Khan.

While staying at Paunta, the Guru spent much of his time in composing poetry. He also enjoyed the chase and the hunt every day. He extended and beautified Paunta with gardens and pleasure grounds.

This peaceful life was interrupted after some time. The hill chiefs came to fight against him. They were led by Raja Bhim Chand of Bilaspur.

The above said Pathans heard that the hill chiefs were about to attack the Guru. Four of the five Pathan officers, with the soldiers under them, decided to desert the Guru. They went over to the Guru's enemies. One Pathan officer, Kale Khan and the soldiers under him, however, remained faithful to the Guru.

The Guru lost no time in informing Sayyid Budhu Shah of the misconduct of the Pathan soldiers.

The Sayyid felt their misbehaviour to be a personal disgrace to himself. He made up his mind to remove this disgrace. He decided to help and fight for the Guru. Accordingly, he joined the Guru along with his brother, his four sons, and seven hundred disciples.

A bloody battle was fought at Bhangani, near Paunta. Sayyid Budhu Shah, his brother, his sons, and his disciples all fought with great bravery and devotion. They killed a large number of the Guru's enemies. His men shouted like thunder. They drove the enemy before them as a hurricane drives dry leaves and straw. Two of his sons and several disciples fell fighting for the Guru. The Guru's enemies suffered heavy losses and a crushing defeat.

After the battle, Sayyid Budhu Shah went to the Guru to take leave of him. His surviving sons and disciples were with him. The Guru said to him, 'You have proved to be a true lover and worshipper of God. Deem not your two sons as dead. They shall live forever in God's blissful presence. Only those really die who care not for God and their duty, who turn cowards on the field of battle.'

Sayyid Budhu Shah replied, 'O true Guru, I do not, at all, mourn for my sons who have died fighting for you. They have laid down their lives in a good and noble cause. They have gone to enjoy seats in Paradise. They shall live there for ever. I am proud of them.'



*The Guru's gift to Pir Budhu Shah. (page 24)*

The Guru considerd how best to reward Sayyid Budhu Shah. He conferred on him the most precious gift of God's Name. He told him how to attain union with God. He made him other gifts also. The Guru was, at the time, combing his hair. A Sikh was standing near, holding his turban. The Sayyid requested the Guru to give him the comb with his loose hair in it. The Guru laid the comb with the loose hair in it upon his turban. He presented the turban and the comb to Sayyid Budhu Shah. He said, 'Keep these in memory of this day.' He also gave him a *kirpan* and a robe of honour. Finally, he gave him five thousand rupees for distribution among his disciples.

Sayyid Budhu Shah returned home. His wife and other relatives began to mourn for his two sons who had fallen on the battlefield. He advised them not to mourn. His sons had not died. They had gone to Paradise to live there in joy and peace for ever. His wife dried her tears. She blessed her sons. She became a disciple of the Guru like her husband. Long afterwards, she and her husband were killed by agents of Emperor Aurangzeb. Their fault was that they had faith in Guru Gobind Singh, that they were his disciples. Both of them died fighting like true soldier-disciples.

## 4

**MAHANT KIRPAL AND HAIYAT KHAN**

Baba Sri Chand, Guru Nanak's elder son, remained an unmarried *sadhu* all his life. He started a branch of the Sikh faith. He called it the Udasi faith. His followers came to be called Udasi Sikhs or Udasis.

A large number of Udasis lived comfortably at Guru Gobind Singh's darbar. They took food from the Guru's free kitchen. Most of them were mere idlers. They lived in ease and comfort. They spent most of their time in idle discussions, gossip, rest and sleep. No wonder that they grew very fat and disinclined to do any work.

We have seen that Guru Gobind Singh had to engage in a bloody battle against the hill chiefs. The battle took place at Bhangani. We have seen what part was played in that battle by the Muslim fakir named Sayyid Budhu Shah. We shall now tell what part was played by Udasi *sadhus* in that battle.

The Guru had sent out men to watch the movements of the enemy. These scouts reported that the enemy forces were marching to attack. The Guru

ordered all his men to get ready for the coming fight. He sent similar orders to his Udasi Sikhs also. He said to them, 'Put on your turbans. Take up your arms. Be ready for defence.'

The Udasis had no inclination to fight. They did not wish to lose their lives. They said to themselves, 'It is true that we have been taking food from the Guru's free kitchen. But we are not prepared to lose our lives on that account. Surely, the world is wide enough for us. There are other lands and places where we can beg for our living. The Guru's kitchen is not the only one left for us in the world. It was not for fighting battles that we left our homes.'

Thinking thus, they decided to run away during the night. They did so one by one, so that their departure might remain unnoticed. All of them, about five hundred in number, went away. Their leader or mahant, named Kirpal, was the only Udasi who did not go.

Next morning the Guru was informed that the Udasis had run away during the night. Their leader, Mahant Kirpal, was the only one who had not fled. The Guru smiled and said, 'The root at any rate, is left. As the root still exists, the tree shall grow and bear flowers and fruit. If the mahant had also gone, the Udasis would have been all uprooted and finished. They would have been expelled from the fold of Sikhism.'

The Guru then sent for the mahant. When he appeared, the Guru said to him, 'O mahant, where

have your Udasis gone ? They feasted and fattened themselves on our sacred food. In the hour of our need they have all run away.'

The mahant calmly replied, 'O true Guru, they were all your disciples. All disciples are made by you. You possess the power to pardon those who have taken a wrong path. Do pardon those who have fled in fear. I am here to serve you with my whole self.'

The battle was in full swing. Mahant Kirpal was also there in the field. He was on horseback. He was watching the brave deeds being done by the Guru's warriors. He felt an urge within himself to take part in the battle. He saw Haiyat Khan advancing. This Haiyat Khan was, as you know, one of the four Pathan officers who had deserted the Guru. Mahant Kirpal went up to the Guru. He said, 'O true Guru, permit me to fight against that faithless Pathan.'

The Guru replied, 'O holy saint, you can kill with your words. You need not fight. Pray that I may be victorious. Your prayer will surely be answered. My enemies shall be killed or made to run for their lives.'

But the mahant was eager to engage Haiyat Khan. He again prayed the Guru to let him fight. The Guru asked, 'With what weapon are you going to fight ? Mahant Kirpal lifted his club and said, 'With this



*The Mahant challenged Haiyat Khan. (page 29)*

weapon of war.' The Guru smiled and said, 'All right, go and engage your enemy.'

The mahant was on horseback. He had his matted hair twisted round his head. His body was clothed with a thin plaster of ashes. His big belly was projecting far in front of his saddle. On his shoulder he held his 'weapon of war', his wooden club. In this form he was going to engage a mighty and practised warrior armed with the latest weapons of destruction.

The mahant advanced and challenged Haiyat Khan. The Pathan saw that the mahant had no war-like weapon. Haiyat Khan did not like to attack such an unarmed, defenceless man. All who saw the mahant said, 'How can that fat fakir fight against a mighty Pathan warrior ? How can a sparrow stand against an almighty hawk ?'

The mahant continued to challenge Haiyat Khan. 'Come on, O faithless jackal,' he said, 'come on and taste my club, my weapon of war.' At last, Haiyat Khan advanced against the mahant. He lifted his sword and aimed a powerful blow at Mahant Kirpal. The latter received the blow on his club. And lo ! Haiyat Khan's sword fell to pieces. That was a miracle indeed. The mahant then said, 'Now it is my turn to strike. Be careful. Defend yourself.' So saying, the mahant rose on his stirrups. Wielding his club with both hands, he struck Haiyat Khan on the head. The blow was so forceful that Haiyat Khan's skull broke. His brains issued forth from his broken skull and stained the battlefield.

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The mahant continued to display his skill and bravery. At last the Pathans retreated. Mahant Kirpal then made his way to the Guru. The Guru said, 'Well done, my sadhu-warrior, well done !'

## 5

## A CONFECTIONER TURNS A WARRIOR

The wonderful feat performed by Mahant Kirpal at Bhangani became the talk of the day. The news of his daring, wonderful soldierly deed reached Paunta in no time. People said to each other, 'How wonderful ! Did you ever hear of such a feat before ? Our Guru can work wonders. Here was a fat, big-bellied *sadhu*, untrained in the use of war-like weapons. He had never handled a sword or a spear. See, how our Guru brings about a wonderful change in him. He pats the unarmed *sadhu*. He sends him to face a strong and well-armed Pathan soldier. People laugh as the *sadhu*, with a club on his shoulder, advances against the Pathan. The Pathan aims a blow at him. He breaks the Pathan's sword into pieces. Then, with his wooden club he breaks the Pathan's skull. This he does as easily as Sri Krishna used to break the earthen pots carried by the *gopis*. The Pathan's brains issued forth as did butter from the *gopis'* earthen pots broken by Sri Krishna. Did you ever before hear of such a miracle ? Our Guru can, indeed, turn sparrows into hawks. Nay, he makes tiny sparrows pluck and kill mighty hawks. How wonderful ! How wonderful !'

Such talk reached the ears of a confectioner. His name was Lal Chand. The news and the talk had a strange effect on him. They aroused in him the martial spirit and zeal of a warrior. He felt in him a strong urge to go and fight the Guru's enemies. He made up his mind to go to Bhangani. He closed his shop at once. He went to Bhangani as fast as his legs could carry him.

Arriving there, he hurried to the spot where the Guru stood directing the battle. He said, 'O true Guru, I feel within me a strong urge to join the fight. Pat me on the back and send me into the battle. I will not prove a coward. But you will have to do something more, too. I have never learnt to handle any war-like weapon. I have never handled a sword or a spear. You will have to give me some suitable weapon. You will also have to tell me how to handle and use that weapon. If you pat and bless me, I can use every weapon most effectively. With your blessings, I can face, fight, and fell even the strongest Pathan.'

The Guru replied, 'All right, you may do as your heart urges you to do. If you want to fight, take and mount a horse.' A horse was given to him. He had never before mounted a horse. But he managed to reach and sit on the back of the horse given to him by the Guru. The Guru then gave him a sword and a shield. The confectioner said, 'How are these to be used ? In which hand should I hold the sword ? In which hand should I hold the shield ? And in which hand should I hold the horse's reins ? The Guru smiled and said, 'Take the sword in your right hand. Take the shield in



*A confectioner turns a warrior. (page 32)*

your left hand. Leave the reins alone. When anyone tries to hit you with a sword, put forward the shield. Receive the blow on the shield. Then use the sword with the right hand.'

The confectioner held the sword and the shield as directed. He let go the horse's reins. The soldiers standing near laughed aloud at the confectioner's ignorance. They said, 'Here is a warrior, indeed! And a rider, too ! But our Guru has the power to work wonders. He can make tiny sparrows pluck and kill powerful hawks. The confectioner will surely overcome strong, practised warriors. Let us watch him. Let us cheer him.'

The confectioner ran his horse into the Pathan army. The Guru's soldiers cheered him and shouted, '*Sat Sri Akal*'. Bhikhan Khan saw the confectioner advancing towards him. As you know, Bhikhan Khan was one of the four faithless Pathan officers who had deserted the Guru. A friend of his, named Mir Khan, was standing near him. He, too, was a strong, well-practised warrior. Bhikhan Khan said to him, 'See, here comes a *Bania* to fight against us Pathans. He has been all day weighing and selling flour, pulses and salt. Now the Guru has given him a sword and a shield. He cannot sit firmly on horseback. But this horseman comes to fight against us who are strong and skilful soldiers. Meet him. Take his arms and his horse. Then cut him into pieces. Make him lick the dust.'

Mir Khan went forward to meet the confectioner. He fell upon him as a hawk falls upon a sparrow. He drew his sword and aimed a blow at the confectioner. The latter received the blow on his shield. Then, with his mind fixed on the Guru and saying, '*Akal*' he struck a blow at Mir Khan. The blow proved effective and fatal. Mir Khan's head was separated from his body. Shouts of '*Sat Sri Akal*' rose from the Guru's soldiers.

Mir Khan had come to make the confectioner lick the dust. But he himself had to fall and lick the dust. Seeing him killed by a confectioner, the Pathans and the hillmen were filled with fear and wonder. They said, 'How can we defeat the Guru ? He can make fat, unarmed *sadhus* and simple shopkeepers face and kill strong and well-trained warriors. How wonderful !'

Soon, thereafter, the Guru's enemies took to their heels. He let them run away. He did not let them be chased and killed. He did not want to shed blood unnecessarily.

## 6

## THE GURU'S AMAZING CALL

Guru Nanak as well as his successor Gurus used to let their hair and beards grow their natural length. On their heads they wore turbans and not caps. Most Sikhs followed their Gurus' example. They had long hair and flowing beards. They wore turbans on their heads. But, quite a considerable minority continued to shave even after embracing Sikhism.

Guru Gobind Singh decided that all Sikhs should wear long hair and beards like their Gurus. He said to himself, 'Sikhism is distinct and different from Islam and Hinduism. In their character, outlook, customs and daily conduct, the Sikhs are distinct and different from their neighbours—Hindus and Muhammedans. I want that in form and appearance, also, they should be distinct and different from all others. They should have a form and appearance of their own. They should have a uniform of their own. A Sikh mixed with even a thousand non-Sikhs should be immediately and easily recognizable.'

Thinking thus, the Guru sent out orders that all Sikhs should let their hair and beards grow their

natural length. They should wear turbans and not caps. On one occasion some Sikhs said to the Guru, 'If we wear long hair, both Hindus and Muhammedans will laugh at us and tease us.' The Guru said, 'I tell you how to stop them from teasing and laughing at you. You should all wear arms. You should, at all times, be ready to defend yourselves. No one will dare to insult you.'

In the beginning of the year 1699 A. D. the Guru sent out special invitations to all Sikhs. They were desired to attend a special gathering. The gathering was to be held on the occasion of that year's Baisakhi. There was a good response to the invitations. As the Baisakhi day approached, companies of Sikhs began to arrive at Anandpur. They came from all parts of India.

The Guru ordered that carpets be spread on a raised piece of open space. A beautiful tent was also set up nearby. At that place now stands the Gurdwara named Sri Kesgarh.

On the day just before the Baisakhi day, a large open-air gathering was held at the above said place. As soon as the morning prayers were over, the Guru went into the tent. He remained there for some time. The assembled Sikhs wondered what the Guru was doing inside the tent. He came out at last. His appearance was altogether different from what it had usually been. His eyes shone like fire. His face was hard-set and red. His naked sword shone and shook in his uplifted hand. He looked

like a warrior about to enter a battlefield. In a voice as of thunder he said. 'My dear Sikhs, this sword of mine wants to taste the blood of a Sikh. Is there any one among you ready to lay down his life at a call from me ?'

All grew pale on hearing such a strange demand. There was no response to this amazing call. The Guru repeated the question. Still there was no reply. A third time he spoke in a louder voice, 'Is there any true Sikh of mine among you ? If so, let him give me his head as an offering, as a proof of his faith in me.' At last Bhai Daya Ram, a Khatri of Lahore, rose and said, 'O true king, my head is at your service. Cut it off from the trunk and make it lie at your sacred feet.'

The Guru took him by the arm. He dragged him into the tent. The Sikhs gathered outside the tent heard from inside the tent the sound of a blow of a sword. They heard the sound of a body falling on the ground. They saw a stream of blood coming out of the tent. It appeared that the Guru had beheaded Bhai Daya Ram.

After a while, the Guru came out of the tent. His face was redder than before. His eyes were red as blood. The sword in his uplifted hand was dripping with fresh blood. In a loud thundering voice he called out, 'Is there another true Sikh ready to give me his head ?' The Sikhs gathered there felt convinced that the Guru really meant what he said. They were convinced that Bhai Daya Ram had

been killed. There was dead silence again. The Guru called once more. There was no response. He called for the third time.

On the third call, Bhai Dharm Das, a Jat Sikh of Delhi, stood up and said, 'O true king, take my head. Death with your sword will give me life everlasting.'

The Guru caught him by the arm. He dragged him forcefully into the tent. The same two sounds were heard. The first was that of a blow with a sword. The second was that of a body falling on the ground. As before, a stream of fresh-drawn blood came out of the tent. The Sikhs assembled outside the tent were convinced that Bhai Dharm Das, too, had been killed. They were all filled with terror. Many of them fled for their lives.

A short time after, the Guru came out again. He looked fiercer than before. His face and eyes were redder. Waving his sword above his head, he called out, 'Is there any other Sikh ready to offer me his head? I am in very great need of the heads of my Sikhs. Be quick.'

More and more Sikhs slipped away. The gathering became thinner and thinner. Every face was pale. All lips were dry. All heads were lowered. All eyes were downcast. Some went to the Guru's mother, Mata Gujri. They complained to her against the Guru. 'He has gone



*My sword wants to taste the blood of a Sikh. (page 38)*

mad,' said they. 'He is killing his Sikhs. Remove him from guruship. Make a grandson of yours the guru in his place.' She sent a messenger to him. But he was in no mood to receive or listen to any messenger. He repeated the call for another head. On the third call Bhai Mohkam Chand, a washerman of Dwarka, stood up and offered his head. The Guru treated him in the same manner as he had treated the other two. The same two sounds were heard. A stream of blood was seen coming out from the tent. 'So another Sikh has been killed,' thought the Sikhs gathered outside the tent.

After a short time, the Guru came out of the tent. In the same manner as before, he called out for another head. Again there was no response. Some more Sikhs ran away. Others lowered their heads. The Guru called again. Still there was no response. On the third call, Bhai Sahib Chand, a barber of Bidar, stood up and offered his head. The Guru treated him in the same manner as he had treated the other three. The same two sounds were heard from inside the tent. A fresh stream of blood was seen to flow out. 'So the fourth Sikh has been killed,' thought the Sikhs gathered outside the tent.

After a while, the Guru again came out of the tent. He was waving his sword covered with fresh blood. He again called out for another head. At

this, most of the remaining Sikhs ran away from the gathering. Only a few had the courage to stay. At first there was no response. The call was repeated. At last Bhai Himmat Rai, a water-carrier of Jagannath, stood up and offered his head. The Guru treated him in the same way in which he had treated the other four. The same two sounds were heard from inside the tent. A stream of blood was seen to flow out. 'So the fifth Sikh has been killed,' thought the Sikhs gathered outside the tent. 'How many more will go the same way?'

This time the Guru stayed longer in the tent. At last he came out. He was dressed in bright saffron-coloured garments. His sword was sheathed. His face was beaming with joy and satisfaction. He was followed by five Sikhs dressed exactly like him. Who were they? Oh wonder! They were the same who had given their heads to the Guru! They had been killed! Had they been brought back to life? Their faces, their dress, and their whole appearance were all like the Guru's.

The Guru seated them near himself. Then he said aloud, 'When Guru Nanak tested his Sikhs, only one Sikh, namely Guru Angad, stood the test successfully. Now I have found five Sikhs totally devoted to the Guru. I am immensely pleased. It is a matter of joy for all of us. The Sikh faith will grow and flourish well and ever. These five are my *Panj Piare*,

my Beloved Five. They are in my form, I am in theirs. They are one with me. I am in them. They are in me.'

## A REVOLUTIONARY ACT

On the Baisakhi day of 1699 A. D., Guru Gobind Singh held a large gathering of his Sikhs. It was held at the place where now stands the gurdwara called Sri Kesgarh. Sikhs from all parts of India attended the gathering.

The Guru was dressed all in white. He was in high spirits. His face was bright and cheerful. He sat on his throne. The Beloved Five sat before him in the first row. When all had assembled, he addressed the gathering as follows : 'I have called you here today for a special purpose. I am going to do something today which will make this day most memorable in Sikh history, something which will mark a turning point in the history of my people and country.'

'So far, as of course you all know, the custom of *charnpahul* has been in vogue for admitting persons to the Sikh faith. A vessel of water was placed before the Guru. He touched the water with his toe. The person who wanted to become a Sikh drank a little of that water. Such has been the practice so far. It

developed humility. That virtue is very precious and essential. As Baba Nanak has said, "Sweetness and humility are the essence of all good qualities." But the times have changed. Sweetness and humility alone cannot successfully meet the challenge of the greatly changed and rapidly changing times. Now we need fearless bravery, dauntless courage, and skill in the use of arms. We need them for the defence of the faith. We need them for maintaining the Sikh nation. We need them to free our country from the rule of cruel foreigners. We need them to bring to the common man, the blessings of justice, love, equality and brotherliness.

'From today the Sikh nation will be called the *Khalsa*. *Charnpahul* will be replaced by *Khanda da Amrit*. The person desiring to become a Sikh will drink water that has been stirred with a *khanda* or two-edged sword. This water will be called *amrit* or nectar.

'They who partake of this *amrit* will be changed from jackals to lions, from sparrows to hawks. They will be called Singhs or lions. All castes, all people, are equally welcome to take the *amrit*. I mean to make all Sikhs give up and forget their previous castes. I want to combine them all into one Brotherhood, the *Khalsa*. In that Brotherhood all will be equal in all respects—the lowest with the highest.'

The Guru then took some pure water in a vessel of steel. He knelt beside that steel vessel. He told the Five Dear Ones to stand around him. They were desired to fix their eyes on the Guru. They were to fix their thoughts on God. Kneeling beside the vessel of steel,

hands. He said to her, 'You have come at a very appropriate time. You have brought something which will prove very useful. I am going to change my Sikhs into Singhs or lions. The *amrit* prepared by me will produce fearless courage, strength and bravery. These qualities are very useful. They are very much in need these days. They are needed very urgently now. They will be needed still more urgently in the times to come. But they alone can prove to be dangerous possessions. They must be accompanied by a sweetness of temper and a peace-loving nature. The sweets brought by you will have that effect. Pour the sweets into the nectar. Those who drink it will be brave, strong and fearless like lions. At the same time, they will possess the grace of womanly sweetness.'

Mata Jito ji poured the *patashas* into the *amrit* which the Guru had prepared. He dissolved them in it by stirring it with the two-edged sword. Then he stood up, holding the vessel of *amrit* in his hands. He made the Beloved Five kneel on their left knees in the soldierly fashion. He told them to look into his eyes. He gazed into the eyes of each of them, turn by turn. At the same time, he threw five times, showers of the baptismal nectar in the Dear One's face. At each shower, he called upon the Dear One to say aloud, '*Wahiguru ji ka Khalsa, Sri Wahiguru ji ki Fateh*'. Then the Guru sprinkled the nectar five times on the Dear One's hair and eyes. Then he said to one of them, 'Hold the steel vessel in both hands. Drink some of the nectar. Then pass the vessel on to the next Dear One.

Let the vessel go round, forward and backward, in this way, till the whole of the nectar has been drunk.'

As we have seen, the Beloved Five belonged to different castes. One of them belonged to a so-called high caste. He was a Khatri. The other four were all from the so-called low castes—a jat, a washerman or calico-printer, a water-carrier and a barber. For such five persons to drink from the same vessel was an act not heard of ever or anywhere before in India. It was a revolutionary act. It shocked all who were proud of their castes.

Then the Guru said, 'Those who take the *amrit* become my lions. I name them Singhs. Therefore, the names of my Beloved Five will no longer be Daya Ram, Dharm Das, Mukham Chand, Sahib Chand and Himmat Rai. Their names will be Daya Singh, Dharm Singh, Muhkam Singh, Sahib Singh and Himmat Singh. From now on, the names of my Sikhs will not end in "Das, Rai, Ram, Mal or Chand". They will all end in "Singh". My Sikhs must always wear the following five articles whose Panjabi names begin with 'K', namely, *Kes* (uncut hair), *Kangha* (a comb), *Kirpan* (a sword), *Kachh* (a short drawers) and *Kara* (a steel bracelet). My Sikhs should practise arms. They should be ever ready to use them for the defence of their principles, their faith and their country. They should not show their backs to the foe in battle. They should ever live and act according to the three golden rules laid down by Baba Nanak. They should ever help the poor. They should always protect those who seek their protection and help. They should give up and forget

their previous castes. They now all belong to one caste, namely the *Khalsa*. They must not drink or smoke. They must not eat *halal* meat, that is, the meat of animals killed in the Muhammedan fashion.

They must not worship idols, cemeteries or cremation grounds. They must not worship gods and goddesses. They should worship and believe in only one God. They must rise early, three hours before dawn, bathe, read or recite the prescribed hymns of the Gurus, and meditate on God. They should be honest and truthful. They should set apart a tenth of their income for the Guru's cause.'

After that the Guru asked his Beloved Five to prepare the *amrit* as he had done. When it was ready, he stood up before them with clasped hands. He begged them to baptize him, to give him the *amrit* in exactly the same way as he had baptized them. They were astonished at the Guru's proposal. They hesitated. But the Guru said, 'Why do you hesitate ? I have given you my form, my glory and my appearance. I name you the *Khalsa*. The *Khalsa* is the Guru and the Guru is the *Khalsa*. There is no difference between you and me. I am now your *chela* or disciple. Baptize me as I have baptized you. Make me a Singh as I have made you Singhs.'

The Beloved five obeyed. They baptized the Guru just in the same way as he had baptized them. His name was made to end in 'Singh'. It was changed from Guru Gobind Das or Gobind Rai to Guru Gobind Singh.

The Guru then invited others to take the *amrit*. Thousands of them were baptized that day. They all became Singhs or the Guru's lions. The baptismal ceremony was carried on daily for several days.

Thus was born the Khalsa—a nation of saint-soldiers, worshippers of one God, friends and servants of man, and sworn foes of all tyrants; a Brotherhood in which all were to be equal in all respects and in which all castes were united to form one caste.

## A DONKEY IN A TIGER'S GARB

One day, a Sikh appeared before Guru Gobind Singh at Anandpur. He did not bring any offering for the Guru. This was something unusual for a Sikh. He said to the Guru, 'O true king, pardon me for coming empty-handed. All the same, I want to make an offering to you. I am sure you will like it. But it is too heavy. I have not been able to lift and bring it to this place.' The Guru enquired, 'What is it? Where is it?' The Sikh replied, 'Away in the forest, I came across a big tiger. I killed it. I should have brought its body to you as an offering. But, as I have said, it is too heavy. I am not strong enough to lift it and bring it to you. Be pleased to lend me suitable assistance.'

The Guru sent some strong men with the Sikh. They brought the tiger's body and placed it before the Guru. He was pleased to see it. He praised the Sikh for his bravery. He then got the tiger's body skinned. Then he sent for a potter's donkey. He got that donkey clothed in the tiger's skin. The donkey, thus dressed as a tiger, was let loose. All animals

ran away from it out of fear. Even men, women and children fled on seeing it approach. Soon there was a panic among the people. The donkey in the tiger's garb enjoyed the new experience. It had no longer to carry any loads. It had no longer to obey any master. It was free to run about and feed at pleasure.

This went on for some time. In the meantime, several complaints were made to the Guru. Several people requested him to kill or get killed the dreadful beast. In response to these complaints and requests, the Guru went out to shoot that 'dreadful beast'. He took a party of Sikhs with him. The hunting party approached the donkey in the tiger's grab, raising the usual shouts and cries. On hearing the noise made by the Guru's party, the supposed tiger began to bray in terror. It ran away at top speed. The hunting party allowed it to go away unchecked and unpursued. It fled for protection to its old master. It was trembling with fear. Its behaviour and movements were not at all like those of a tiger. They were those of a donkey. The potter was puzzled to see a tiger behave and move like a donkey. 'What is the matter with this tiger?' he said to himself. He approached it cautiously. As he did so, the supposed tiger began to bray and move its tail.

The potter realized that the animal before him was not a tiger. It was only a donkey in a tiger's garb. He was greatly amused at this discovery. He



*A donkey in tiger's garb. (page 52)*

had a hearty laugh. Then he said, 'So, my lost donkey has come back in a tiger's suit. But it is a donkey all the same. Come on, my dear. I shall make you appear in your true garb. You have enjoyed quite a long holiday. I have missed you very much all these days. Now you will have to carry loads as before. But you have become stronger. So, the loads will be heavier than before.'

Saying this, the potter took off the tiger's skin from the donkey's body. Then he gave it a sound beating for having run away. He then employed it in carrying loads. The loads were much heavier now.

All who heard the story were greatly amused. They said to each other, 'So we were all deceived. It was only a donkey dressed as a tiger. Yet how dreadful it looked! If it had continued to wear the tiger's skin, it would have continued to terrify us all.'

Some Sikhs asked the Guru what he meant by what he had done. The Guru replied, 'I want you to learn a lasting lesson from this. As long as you were bound by castes and other Hindu beliefs and customs, you were like donkeys. You were driven about by persons of no position or power. I have freed you from all those chains. I have conferred on you wordly powers and blessings. I have clothed you in the grab of tigers. I have given you the

courage and bravery of lions. I have made you superior to your neighbours. I have given you the Khalsa uniform. I have made you my Singhs or lions. Stick and cling to that uniform of five 'Ks' (*Kakars*). Don't ever discard it. Remember what happened to the potter's donkey. When it wore the tiger's garb, it looked like a tiger. It was in fact, taken to be a tiger by all who saw it. Nobody could go near it or think of using it as a beast of burden. But when the tiger's skin was taken off, it was caught and beaten by the potter. It was once again made to carry loads. If it had not behaved and brayed like a donkey, if it had preserved the tiger's garb and conduct, it would have been still regarded and treated as a tiger.

'You should learn a lesson from this. You must have not only the appearance of tigers, or lions. You should also possess the qualities befitting your appearance. This you can do by taking the *amrit* introduced by me and by following the Rules of Conduct (*Rahat*) prescribed by me for the Khalsa. An *Amritdhari* Sikh or a Singh of mine will have the exterior as well as the interior of the king of the animal world. As long as you, my dear Sikhs, preserve that exterior, your enemies will fear you. You will be always victorious. But if you part with this exterior, if you discard the Khalsa uniform, you will again revert to your original condition. You will fall from the lofty position to which I am lifting you.'

'Yes, Guru Nanak's Sikhs should, henceforth, take the baptismal nectar—*amrit*—as prescribed by me. They should ever keep distinct from others in character and conduct, as well as in appearance. So long as the Sikhs preserve the form and appearance that I have given them, so long will they enjoy my blessings. They will have in them my spirit and my light. I shall be with them at all times and in all places. *Wahiguru ji Ka Khalsa, Sri Wahiguru ji Ki fateh.* God's is the Khalsa, and God's shall the victory be.'

It is really a great misfortune that a large number of the present-day Sikhs do not get baptized as desired and enjoined upon them by Guru Gobind Singh. Too many of them are seen going about without the Khalsa uniform, of which the most essential item is *Kes* or uncut hair and beard. They are no longer distinct in appearance, from others. They are thus disobeying Guru Gobind Singh's order. They are sure, also, to lose the distinctive Sikh character and qualities. This baneful practice must be checked and ended; otherwise, the Sikh community will suffer a terrible setback and loss. It will no longer remain a community of Sardars, a brotherhood of Saint Soldiers. Let us act in time. Let every Sikh child and youth, and everyone who calls himself or herself a Sikh, take a vow to take *amrit* wear the Khalsa uniform and observe the Khalsa *rahat* or the code of conduct prescribed

by Guru Gobind Singh. Let everyone of them strive  
to reclaim all who have gone astray and discarded the  
Khalsa uniform and way of life.

## “HINDU RELIGION IN DANGER !”

The news of Guru Gobind Singh's revolutionary act and his creation of the Khalsa soon spread far and wide. It did not have the same effect on all people. Naturally enough, it was hailed joyously by a vast majority of the people. That majority consisted mostly of the so-called low-castes and out-castes. They rejoiced that the Guru was going to liberate them from the chains of the caste system.

Do you know the chief features of the Hindu caste system ? We shall state them here in brief. That will help you to appreciate the full significance of the Guru's revolutionary act. Under that system the Hindu society was divided into four main classes or castes, namely, Brahmans, Khatris, Vaishyas and Shudras.

The Brahmans belonged to the highest caste. They alone had the right to read and study the religious books. They alone had the right to worship and offer prayers to gods and goddesses. They alone had the right to perform religious rites and ceremonies. For all this the low-caste people had to supply all their needs and requirements.

The Khatris formed the second highest caste. They were inferior to the Brahmans and superior to the other two castes. They were the warrior class. They alone could bear arms. They alone could become soliders, rulers, and kings. The low-caste people had to obey them and supply all their needs and requirements.

Traders and shopkeepers formed the Vaishya class. All workers and labourers, such as carpenters, shoemakers, barbers, water-carriers and farmworkers were classed as Shudras. They were forbidden to hear, read, or possess the Vedas.

Besides the four castes, there were people who were regarded as out-castes, as having no caste. They were treated as untouchables.

The low-castes and the out-castes had to toil and moil for the high-castes, as well as for themselves. They could not study religious books. They could not perform or take part in religious rites. They could not bear arms even for self-defence. They had no voice in the management of public affairs.

Women, even those of the high castes, were not permitted to perform or take part in Vedic rites. They could not study religious books or the Vedas. Women were, therefore, regarded as Shudras and beyond the pale of religion.

But Guru Gobind Singh's revolutionary act was going to change all this completely. It is true that the previous Gurus had preached equality of all human beings. They had worked for ending the prejudices and evils of the caste system. Men and women of all castes and classes, could sit together and dine together in the Guru's kitchens and in the Sikh homes and gatherings. They could all read religious books and take part in religious rites. It is true that the high-caste people had learnt to mingle with persons of low-castes in *langars* and *diwans*. But they had not been called upon to eat or drink from the same vessel as the low-castes. But Guru Gobind Singh was requiring all persons, men and women of all castes to eat and drink from the same vessel. He was ending all inequalities based on the caste system. He was going to make all people—the high-castes, the low-castes, and the out-castes—equal in all respects. He was elevating the lowest to a position of equality with the highest, in all respects.

We have seen that the four Dear Ones included Sikhs from the so-called low-castes. Yet they were given the right to prepare *amrit* and baptize others. What is even more significant, the Guru begged them to baptize him to begin with. He called them his *guru*. He called himself their *chela* or disciple. Members of all castes and classes could bear arms and become leaders, soldiers, kings and rulers. All could become warriors to defend themselves, their community and their country. All had to work for

their living. Even the Brahmans and the Khatris had to do the same. They could no longer live on the earnings of others.

Naturally, the 'high-caste' people did not like all this. The Brahmans were upset most of all. They had enjoyed the special rights and benefits of their special position for centuries. They felt that all these rights of theirs were being taken away. They felt that they were being thrown down from their high positions. They felt that the low-castes and the out-castes were being elevated to a position of equality with them. They did not, at all, like this levelling up and levelling down of the various castes and classes.

Now, Anandpur was situated in the territory of the hill chief of Bilaspur Hill State. Guru Teg Bahadur had built it on the land purchased from the Raja. There were over twenty small States in these hills. The chiefs or Rajas of these hill States were Hindu Rajputs. They were Khatris by caste.

A party of Brahmans went to the hills chiefs. They poured out their hearts to them. They aroused in them anger and fear against Guru Gobind Singh. They told them of his revolutionary act. They told them of the harm which that act was sure to cause to the Hindu religion and the high-castes. They said, 'He is out to wipe out the Hindu religion. He is breaking up the caste system. He has declared a war on the caste rules. He is mixing up the

four castes along with the out-castes and uniting them all into one caste or class. In that way he is creating a new caste which he calls the Khalsa. On becoming members of the Khalsa, all—high-castes, low-castes and out-castes—become equal in all respects. His movement is becoming dangerously popular. If he is allowed to go unchecked, the Hindu religion and Hindu culture will disappear altogether. It is your duty as Khatris to serve and save your religion. Moreover, even your own interests and safety demand speedy action against him. He is raising an army. If you do not check him in time, he will become too powerful for you. He will drive you all out of your kingdoms and establish his own rule. Rajas, not only your religion but also your kingdoms are in deadly danger. Save them if you can.'

The hill chiefs were already jealous and afraid of the Guru. They had tested his steel at Bhangani. The Brahman's words, therefore, filled them with alarm and anger. They assured the Brahmans that they would soon take suitable action against the Guru. The Brahmans went away highly pleased and satisfied.

# 10

## THE HILL CHIEFS AT ANANDPUR

Guru Gobind Singh's Khalsa was increasing in number and strength, day by day. Reports of what was happening at Anandpur reached the hill chiefs quite regularly. Such reports made them feel restless and worried. Everyone of them began to look upon the Guru as his mortal foe. A number of them met together at Bilaspur. They reviewed the situation created by Guru Gobind Singh's revolutionary act. They discussed what steps should be taken against him. They decided to see the Guru before doing anything else. They said, 'Let us appeal to him to desist from the path which he has chosen. If he refuses to pay heed to our appeal, we shall meet again and plan further effective action against him.'

Accordingly, a deputation of the hill chiefs went to Anandpur to see the Guru. Raja Ajmer Chand of Bilaspur was their leader. The Guru received them with due regard. He gave them seats of honour in his *darbar*. A look at their faces revealed to him what was passing in their minds. He said to them, 'Rajas, your fears are baseless. Your objections against my creation of

the Khalsa are ill-founded. They are based on a misunderstanding of the whole matter. They indicate that you have not fully understood the needs and the spirit of the times. I am not destroying your religion. I am trying to make it purer and stronger. Your religion is not in danger. Your rule and kingdoms are not in danger, either. I do not want to found a kingdom. I do not want to deprive you of your kingdoms and thrones. On the contrary, I want to make you stronger and safer. My aim is to end the rule of the cruel tyrants who treat you as their slaves. Need I remind you of what you and your people have to bear under their rule? They force Hindus to become Musalmans. They mercilessly butcher those who refuse to give up their religion. They dishonour and break the idols of your gods and goddesses. They pull down your temples and build mosques on their sites. Hence, it is they that are destroying your religion. They, not I, pose a danger to your religion. What is far worse, they seize your wives, sisters and daughters before your very eyes. You lack the courage to resist them, the courage even to resent their action. You bear it all with meekness. Nay, you have fallen so low that you meekly give your daughters to your Musalman rulers. You do this because you are afraid of them and want to please them. I am deeply concerned about your fallen state. Are you not ashamed to call yourselves Rajputs? Think of your ancestors. Think of their fearless

bravery and self-respect. If you still possess a trace of that bravery and self-respect, if you still have a trace of the ancient spirit of your race, then listen to my advice. Take the *amrit*. Embrace the Sikh religion. Become members of the Khalsa panth, become Khalsa. Then gird up your loins to free your country and elevate it from its fallen condition.'

The hill chiefs heard all this with lowered heads. Then their leader, Raja Ajmer Chand of Bilaspur said, 'O true king, what you say is correct. It is true that we have fallen, and fallen very low. But we are helpless. There is no way out of our present fallen state. The Turks are too powerful for us. Who can withstand the Pathans and the Mughals? Everyone of them can eat a whole goat. We are nothing before them. Even if we take your *amrit* and embrace the Khalsa religion, we can fare no better. We shall still be no match for them. Even you will fail against them. Your low-caste and out-caste soldiers are, at best, as cats fighting against tigers, or as tiny sparrows fighting against mighty hawks. Hence, it is best to make a virtue of necessity. We must endure what we cannot cure. We would humbly advise you to give up your plans. You cannot succeed.'

On hearing this, the Guru said, 'O Rajas, you have lost the spirit of your mighty ancestors. You have become cowards. It is cowardice that

makes you think and behave in this ignoble way. Why shame your ancient name and fame? Come, shake off this weakness of heart. Take the *amrit*, join the Khalsa. Be leaders in the nation of Saint-warriors founded by me. Cast off all fear. The *amrit* will infuse a new life in you, as it has done in my Sikhs. They are now Singhs or lions. The *amrit* will change you from jackals to tigers. You will become Singhs (lions). These 'sparrows' of mine, as you call them, shall pluck the imperial hawks. I shall make cats fight and defeat tigers. My Singhs will destroy the cruel Pathans and Mughals. They will liberate the country from the curse of the cruel foreigners' rule. Come, join them in this holy campaign of gaining freedom and establishing friendship and equality among all. Come, champion the cause of human equality and freedom of worship. Safeguard the honour of your women. Liberate your unhappy, down-trodden countrymen. Come, God will be your helper and guide.'

But the Guru's words fell on deaf ears, and on dull and dead hearts. The Rajas shook their heads and went away. In their hearts they were determined to work against the Guru. They said, 'We will make him leave the hill region and go to wherfrom his father came to settle here. If need be, we shall call in the aid of the Emperor of Delhi.'



*A surprise attack. (page 69)*

## A SURPRISE ATTACK

The hill chiefs had chosen to become sworn enemies of Guru Gobind Singh. They considered him to be a constantly growing danger. They wished to get rid of him; the sooner, the better. But how to do that was the perplexing question. The memory of Bhangani was yet alive in their minds. They hesitated to attack him; for they feared another and bitterer defeat. All the same, they were ever making plans to achieve their evil objective. They decided that everyone of them should ever be on the look-out for a chance to harm the Guru. Then something occurred which, they thought, was a *godsend* for them.

One day Guru Gobind Singh went out on a hunting excursion in the hills. He had only a small party of Sikhs with him. But they were all strong, selfless, and brave warriors. They had vowed never to show their backs to the enemy. They were ready to lay down their lives for the Guru's sake or at his command. To die fighting for the Guru and his cause was regarded by them as a piece of good luck. The bravest and strongest among them were Udhe Singh and Alim Singh.

Two hill chiefs, Balia Chand and Alim Chand, came to know of the Guru's presence in the hills. They learnt that he was accompanied by only a small party of Sikh soldiers. These Sikh soliders, they learnt further, were scattered about in search or pursuit of game. The news made them glad. It filled their evil minds and hearts with evil thoughts and designs. They thought, 'Here is a godsend for us. Here is a very good opportunity for us to get rid of this grave and ever-growing danger to our race and religion. The Guru has only a small number of Sikhs with him. They are not in battle-form. They are unprepared for a fight. They are scattered here and there in search and pursuit of game. We can easily overcome and finish them, and then catch or kill the Guru. What a good luck ! It will be a most valuable service to our race and religion. We shall win name, fame and honour. Let us fall upon him suddenly. He and his Sikhs will be caught unawares. It will be easy for us to finish them.'

So thinking, the two hill chiefs hastily called out their armies. They marched cautiously and noiselessly, but as quickly as possible. They made a sudden attack on a group of the Guru's companions. The latter were taken by surprise. They had not expected such an attack. But they did not feel unnerved or shaken. They stood their ground well. Each of them cut down a number of the hillmen. But it was a very unequal fight. They were too few in number to cope with the attackers.

They were forced to retreat. But they did so without any panic.

At the time of the attack Guru Gobind Singh was at some distance from the scene of the battle. Because of the intervening hills and bushes, he could not see what was happening. A Sikh went running to him and informed him of what had happened. He rushed to the place of the encounter, raising his war-cry of '*Akal ! Akal ! Sat Sri Akal !*'

His war-cry was heard by the retreating Sikhs. It inspired them with fresh courage and resolve. They rallied around their Guru, raising the Khalsa war-cry of '*Akal ! Akal ! Sat Sri Akal !*' Hearing this war-cry, other members of the hunting party rushed to the place from all sides. They all fell upon the hillmen. They began to cut down their enemies as a woodcutter chops off twigs from a felled tree. The Guru discharged his arrows at the enemy. The arrows took fatal effect. The Sikhs fought with zeal, courage and skill. Both sides fought most desperately.

Balia Chand saw his men being destroyed by the Sikhs. He rushed forward to their aid. Udhe Singh, one of the bravest soldiers of the Guru's army, rushed forward to oppose Balia Chand. The other hill chief Alim Chand, also advanced to support the hill army. Alim Singh, another of the bravest soldiers in the Guru's army, hastened to meet Alim Chand. The fight became severer still.

Alim Chand aimed a blow of his sword at Alim Singh. The latter received it on his shield. Then, with his return blow, he cut off the hill chief's right arm. At this, Alim Chand ran away. Balia Chand was thus left in sole command of the hill army. But he did not long enjoy that honour. He was soon shot dead by Udhe Singh.

The hill troops saw that one of their chiefs had fled from the field and the other was dead. They at once took to flight. Thus the honour victory was left to the Guru and his brave, devoted Sikhs. After the battle the Guru continued his hunting excursion.

The news of this battle and its results added to the hill chiefs' fears. They thought it highly dangerous to allow the Sikhs to increase in power and number. But they felt that the Guru was too powerful for them. So they decided to complain to the Delhi government against him and his Sikhs.

In their representation to the Delhi government they said, 'Guru Gobind Singh has established a new sect distinct from the Hindus and the Muhammedans. He has given it the name of Khalsa. He has united the four castes into one. He welcomes even the out-castes and Muhammedans to join his Khalsa. He invited us to join him. He said to us, "If you consent you will get empire in this world and salvation in the next. You should rise in rebellion against the Emperor. I shall help you with all my forces. As you know, the Emperor killed my father. I desire to avenge his death".

'We did not think it proper to oppose our kind and just Emperor. We refused to accept his advice and suggestion. Consequently, he is displeased with us. He has become our sworn enemy. We by ourselves cannot restrain him. He is too powerful for us. We therefore, beg for the protection of the Emperor against him. We, as loyal subjects of the kind Emperor, pray for assistance to expel the Guru from Anandpur. We beg to submit that if he is not checked in time, he will become a danger to the Emperor's government'.

Emperor Aurangzeb was at that time engaged in warfare in the Deccan. The hill chiefs' representation was heard by the subedar or viceroy of Delhi. It was then forwarded by him to the Emperor for order.

## 12

### A FEW ANECDOTES

#### (1) Bibi Deep Kaur

With his *amrit* or baptismal nectar Guru Gobind Singh had infused fearless valour in all hearts. He was verily changing jackals into lions. He was preparing tiny sparrows to fight and pluck mighty hawks. The process was not confined to men-folk alone. The Guru had lifted women to a position of equality with men. He had baptized them in the same manner as and along with men. Men and women of all castes and classes partook of the *amrit* together, from the same vessel. A spirit of fearless heroism filled them, through and through.

There are numerous examples of Sikh women displaying what is commonly called the manly spirit of courage. One of them is given below :

Once a number of Majha Sikhs, men and women, were on their way to Anandpur. On reaching near a certain village, they halted by the side of a well in order to refresh themselves. A young woman, named Deep Kaur, continued to march on. She proceeded

on till she reached a grove of trees and thick bushes. Her companions were, by then, out of sight and out of earshot.

But she was not afraid. Suddenly, four armed Muhammedans closed around her. They had been lying hidden among the bushes. Their evil designs could be read in their eyes and gestures. They stood blocking her way and threatening her. She displayed the true Sikh spirit. She did not lose her presence of mind. She was not afraid in the least. She showed no trace of panic. Her alert mind worked quickly. She threw one of her gold bangles on the ground before them and said, 'Take that and go away.'

One of the ruffians bent down to pick up the bangle. Deep Kaur quickly drew her sword. In the twinkling of an eye, she cut off his head from his shoulders. His companions were not prepared for such an adventure. They were taken aback and stunned. Before they could recover from the shock and draw their swords, two of them were despatched by that brave daughter of Guru Gobind Singh. Then she fell upon the remaining one. With a quick stroke of her sword she wounded him. He fell on his back. Instantly she was on his chest. Sitting on his chest, she pierced him through the heart. In this way she finished all of her four assailants.

Just at that time the rest of the party arrived on the spot. They saw Deep Kaur just stepping

aside after having killed the last of the ruffians. They saw the four corpses lying on the ground. They were all filled with wonder. They marvelled at the courage and presence of mind displayed by Deep Kaur. They were full of praises for the feat of swordsmanship performed by her. The corpses were thrown into a well. The party proceeded on their way to Anandpur.

The incident was narrated to the Guru. He was highly pleased at the brave and manly performance of Deep Kaur. He said, 'She has proved herself to be a true Sikh. She saved her honour and life. Let all follow her example.'

## (2) A Sikh Lady's Prayer

One day, an old Sikh lady came to the Guru's darbar, weeping and bewailing bitterly. The Guru beckoned her to come near him. Then he asked her why she was weeping and bewailing in that manner. She replied, 'O true king, unbearable is the woe which has befallen me. My husband joined the Khalsa army. He fell fighting bravely for the sacred cause. I was glad to learn that he had served you with his life and earned your blessings. My two elder sons followed their father's example. They also joined the army of your Saint-soldiers. They also fell fighting for the sacred cause. When I heard of their martyrdom, I thanked you and the Lord above. They had made an excellent use of their lives. They had joined their father at the Lord's court.

‘But my third son seems to be unlucky. He has been aspiring to follow the examples set by his father and elder brothers. But he has fallen dangerously ill. His illness seems to be incurable. He is likely to fall a prey to disease. My grief is unbounded. What grieves me is not that he is about to die so young. My woe is that he will not be able to make a good use of his valour and soldierly attainments. Cure him, O true king, make him a soldier of yours. Let him die a Saint-warrior’s death, with God and the Guru in his heart, with the Khalsa war-cry on his lips, and a sword and a shield in his hands.

‘Such is my woe and such is my prayer. Grant my prayer and end my woe, O true king.’

The Guru was highly pleased to hear her. He said, ‘Go, brave lady, to your son’s bedside. Then pray to God. I shall also pray for you. I am sure He will grant our prayers. Your son will get well. He will be a hero in the Khalsa army. He will follow in the footsteps of his father and brothers.’

She went away, rejoicing that her son’s life would not be wasted.

### (3) A Khatri Youth

One day, Guru Gobind Singh was sitting in this darbar, discoursing among his Sikhs. He felt thirsty. He asked a Sikh to fetch him water. Before that Sikh had time to do so, a Khatri youth, who was sitting close by, stood up and volunteered to perform the

service. The Guru noticed that the young boy's hands were very soft and clean. He said to the youth, 'Your hands are soft and tender. Have you ever used them in doing any work ? Do you have any occupation ?'

'No, true king,' replied the youth. 'My parents are rich. We have many servants to serve and work for us. I have never to do any work. In truth, this is the first time that I have offered to use them in doing even such work as fetching water for another.'

Saying this, the youth went, brought a cup water and offered it to the Guru. The Guru refused to take it. He said, 'This water is impure. I cannot take it.'

'No, true king,' said the youth, 'the water is as pure as water can be. I carefully washed my hands and the cup before filling it with fresh water drawn from the well. It is pure, O true king.'

'But,' said the Guru, 'your hands are not pure. They are polluted. By their touch the cup and the water have become polluted.'

Then the Guru raised his voice and said, 'O Sikhs, it is an important article of the Guru's faith that the body must be used in useful work and service. The body is purified by serving others. Dead and untouchable is the body which is not used in serving God's people, in doing some honest, useful work. Service and merit, not birth or caste, determine a Sikh's position in the Guru's darbar. There is no place for idlers here. Always make the best use of

your bodies. Do not shirk work. Work does not lower but dignifies man. Worship without work is no good.'

The youth's pride of birth and wealth got a thorough shaking. He took a vow to lead his life in accordance with the Guru's teachings. To the end of his days he diligently served in the Guru's *langar*. He used to cook and distribute food, carry water, wash utensils and sweep the floor. Needless to say that the Guru was highly pleased with him. Almost every day he asked him to fetch water for him. He took it joyfully, saying, 'How sweet it is !'

## 13

### AT RAWALSAR

Guru Gobind Singh was most eager to carry on his mission in peace. His aim was to prepare his people for winning freedom and equality in all spheres of life—religious, social, economic and political. The hill chiefs did not like the Guru's plans and campaigns. They thought, 'He is sure to make us his first target. If he succeeds, we shall lose our kingdoms, and our religion will be destroyed.' They decided, therefore, to oppose the Guru. They attacked him unprovoked a number of times. They were defeated every time.

After a number of such defeats, the hill chiefs considered it prudent to make peace with the Guru. But their intentions did not undergo any change for the better. In their hearts, they were still his bitter, sworn enemies. The peace which they made was only a temporary affair, a mere deception. It was a cover under which they could plot, prepare and work against him. It was, in other words, a mere camouflage.

Raja Ajmer Chand of Bilaspur was the most prominent among the hill chiefs. Anandpur was in his territory. Naturally, therefore, he was more

concerned and worried about the Guru's activities than his brother chiefs. Hence, though outwardly professing to be at peace with the Guru, he was determined to expel him from Anandpur.

He made a plan to find out the Guru's secrets. That was his first step towards preparing for war against him. He thought that such knowledge would help him in defeating the Guru. Accordingly, he suggested to the Guru to let an ambassador of his be posted at his court. The Guru readily agreed; for he wanted to live at peace with all. Raja Ajmer Chand, thereupon, sent a clever Brahman named Pamma to the Guru's darbar. In name Pamma was an ambassador, but in reality he was a spy. He duly set himself to the task of finding out the Guru's secrets.

One day, at the instance of his master, Pamma suggested to the Guru to go to Rawalsar near Mandi. He added, 'On the occasion of the approaching Baisakhi festival, all hill chiefs will gather there. It will be an excellent opportunity for having heart-to-heart talks and cementing friendly relations with them.'

The Guru was ever anxious for peace. So he readily accepted Pamma's suggestion. In due course, he went there along with his family and a company of his Sikhs. All hill chiefs also gathered there. The Guru arranged a magnificent reception for them. They were charmed with his engaging manners.

They begged him to forget and forgive their past offences. They promised to be ever on good terms with him. The Guru assured them that he would treat them as they deserved.

The Guru explained to them the main principles of the Sikh religion. He exhorted them to join forces with the Khalsa. 'Let us all,' said he, 'make a united effort to free our country from the foreigners' cruel rule.' But they declined to run any such risks. 'The Turks,' said they, 'are too powerful for us. Your dreams can never be fulfilled. We are content with what we have. We feel resigned to our lot as it is. We must endure what we cannot cure.'

The Guru tried to awaken their spirits, to put a new life in their dead hearts. But they refused to accept his advice.

The Guru stayed at Rawalsar for a number of days. His morning and evening religious gatherings attracted large crowds. Hundreds were fed in his free community kitchen. A large number of them were baptized and admitted to the Khalsa faith.

The wives of the rajas expressed a desire to see and hear the Guru. He received them in a separate tent. He gave them instruction suitable to their status and position. They were charmed to see him. The Guru noticed that they were looking at him with deep admiration. Their eyes never left his face. He told the eldest among them that it was time for their departure. The *ranis* did not wish to go away.

But the eldest lady prevailed upon them to terminate their visit.

One of the *ranis* Padmani, daughter of the Raja of Chamba, later sent a letter to the Guru. She took her father's permission before doing so. In the letter she asked some questions on spiritual matters. The Guru sent her suitable replies. The princess was much pleased on receiving the Guru's answer. With her father's permission she went again to visit the Guru. When she bowed before him, he patted her on the shoulder with his bow. She said, 'I am your worshipper. Why have you not patted me with your hand ?' The Guru replied that he never touched any woman, except his wife, with his hand. The princess bowed and went away.

One day a Sikh offered to the Guru a number of weapons of his own make. Among them was a two barrelled gun. The rajas admired the weapons and the skill of their maker. The Guru loaded the gun and said, 'Let a Sikh stand at a distance of a hundred yards. I want to see whether the gun can shoot a man at that distance.'

Several Sikhs rushed to serve as targets for the gun. Everyone of them tried to be in front of the rest. On seeing the struggle, the Guru said, 'Well, let all of you stand in a line where you are. Let us see through how many of you the bullet will pass.' Several Sikhs stood quietly in line. The Guru levelled the gun, took aim, slowly and carefully, and pressed

the trigger. The Sikhs stood firm as a rock. The bullet, passed over their heads. The Guru had meant to test their faith. He wanted the hill chiefs to see what faith his Sikhs had in him. He wanted to show them how his Sikhs were ready to lay down their lives at a word from him.

The hill chiefs became dumb with amazement. They said, 'How can we defeat one whose soldiers serve him with such wonderful zeal and such unquestioning obedience ?'



*Saiyad Beg (page 87)*

### **SAIYAD BEG**

Once Guru Gobind Singh went to Kurukshetra on the occasion of a solar eclipse. He knew that a big religious fair was held there on that occasion. Horses and other animals were also taken there for sale. One of his objects in going there was to carry the message of Guru Nanak to the people assembled there. His second object was to purchase horses for his army.

His discourses attracted large numbers. A large number of the listeners embraced his religion and became members of the Khalsa. Several scholars and *yogis* also came to him to hear his discourses. A leading *yogi*, named Madan Nath, was one of those who waited on the Guru. On seeing the Guru's glorious face, the *yogi* said, 'You have the external appearance of a lion, but inwardly you are a perfect saint.' The Guru replied, 'I have assumed this external appearance in order to strike terror in the hearts of the Turks. They have enslaved our country. Their misrule is inflicting misery and hardship on the people. I aim at ending their oppression and tyranny. I want to liberate my country and countrymen by infusing a new life in them.'

Most of the hill chiefs also attended the fair at Kurukshetra. They, too, came to see and hear the Guru. They renewed their promises of peace and friendship with him. But, as ever before, their promises were false. Their hearts were still full of malice and evil. They saw that the Guru had, at the most, a hundred soldiers with him. So they said, 'Here is a good chance for us to capture or kill the Guru. He will be returning to Anandpur. Let us get ready our forces. We shall waylay him and fall upon him unawares. We are sure to capture or kill him.'

The decision was easy to make. But its execution was quite a difficult matter. The hill chiefs hesitated. They were afraid of the Guru. They were still debating when they heard the news that two Muhammedan generals were near at hand. Their names were Saiyad Beg and Alif Khan. They were each in command of five thousand soldiers. They were on their way from Lahore to Delhi. The hill chiefs decided to hire the two generals and send them against the Guru.

Raja Ajmer Chand met them for the purpose. They were each promised one thousand rupees a day. They agreed to help the hill chiefs in the manner desired by them.

No, Saiyad Beg was a thoughtful man. He had a religious bent of mind. He became curious about the person against whom he had been hired to fight. He made enquiries about the Guru. What he learnt

filled him with admiration and respect. He decided not to fight against him. So he withdrew from the Muhammedan army.

The Guru was near Chamkaur when the Muhammedan hirelings fell upon him. The odds were extremely heavy against him. But he was not the man to lose heart even in face of the heaviest odds. His faith in God and his self-confidence were unshakable. His Sikhs had unbounded faith and confidence in him. They were always joyfully ready to die fighting for him. They fought for their faith and principles, for their Guru and God. How could mere hirelings stand against such soldiers of God !

The battle raged with fury. The news of the hill chiefs' wicked plans had reached Anandpur. Consequently, four hundred Sikh soldiers hurried from there to join the Guru. They arrived when the battle was still raging. They came raising the Khalsa war-cry of '*Akal ! Akal ! Sat Sri Akal !*'

The Guru's fast pouring and unerring arrows had rained death and destruction on the Muhammedan army. The dauntless fighting put in by the Sikhs had made the hirelings waver in their hearts. At that time they heard the Khalsa war-cry raised by the Sikh soldiers coming from Anandpur. This made their hearts sink still further. But the odds were overwhelmingly in their favour. So they fought on with desperate fury.

Saiyad Beg watched the fight for some time. He was filled with admiration for the Guru and his Sikhs. He felt that it was not enough that he should abstain from fighting against that Fakir-soldier of Allah. He should go over to him, kneel before him, become his follower, and actively help him in the unequal fight.

The battle was raging with great fury. It had come to a critical point. At that critical moment Saiyad Beg approached the Sikhs and said, 'Brothers mine, you believe in the Guru, so do I believe in him. I shall, therefore, fight on your side.' He joined the Sikhs. Some of his followers, who held the same views, accompanied him. Soon thereafter he and his men were seen fighting against Alif Khan and his army.

Alif Khan had been wounded. His confidence had been shaken. Saiyad Beg's going over to the Guru took away what little courage he still had. So he ordered a retreat. He was hotly pursued by the Sikhs and Saiyad Beg. On his return from the pursuit, Saiyad Beg alighted from his horse and went to pay his respects to the Guru. He became a devout follower of the Guru. He had been a servant of the Emperor. Now he had given up that service. He threw in his lot with the Guru and his Khalsa. He gave to the Guru all his wealth to assist him in his struggle against his enemies. He remained with the Guru as a trusted and powerful ally.

Some time after the above occurrence, Emperor Aurangzeb sent a large army against the Guru. The

brave and faithful Saiyad Beg led the Khalsa army. He fought very bravely. After a time he was mortally wounded. He died praising the Guru and thanking God that he had given him a chance to make a good use of his life. The Guru came to the place where Saiyad Beg's body lay. He blessed the martyred hero and said, 'He has become immortal. He has gone to live forever with the Father above. Those who lay down their lives in a good cause never die.'

## 15

### **SAIYAD KHAN**

The hill chiefs had become mortal enemies of Guru Gobind Singh. They had determined to kill him, or, at least, to expel him from Anandpur. But all their attempts had proved ineffective. So, once again, they sent a representation to Emperor Aurangzeb. In it they represented the Guru as an enemy of both Islam and Hinduism. They represented him as a sworn enemy of the Emperor and his loyal subjects like the hill chiefs. They added that he wanted to convert all Muslims and Hindus to his faith and establish his own rule in the country.

Emperor Aurangzeb had his own suspicions against the Guru. The hill chiefs' representation confirmed those suspicions. It aroused his fears. He decided to send a large army under Saiyad Khan to conquer and capture the Guru. The imperial army was soon on the march.

In due course the Guru received intelligence that the imperial army had arrived near Thanesar. It would reach Anandpur soon. On hearing this, he mustered his troops. He found that they were only five hundred

strong. The rest of his army had dispersed to their homes. The Guru knew that he was going to face heavy odds. The imperial army was far too strong and numerous for his small force. But he did not feel afraid or dejected. He decided to make the best defence with his present force. He felt sure that God was on his side. He decided to do his best, heart within and God overhead.

Saiyad Khan's troops appeared in sight in a few days. They lost no time in falling upon the Guru's army. The Sikhs fought most valiantly. They held their ground wonderfully well against the overwhelming enemy. A number of Muhammedans were also fighting for the Guru. In fact, they were in the foremost rank of his army. One of them was Maimun Khan. Another was Saiyad Beg. They believed that the Guru was a true saint, a prophet of love and peace. They felt that he was being causelessly and unjustly attacked. They said, 'It is not a war of Muslims against non-Muslims, of believers against unbelievers. It is a war of evil against good, of might against right. Our duty is clear. We must oppose evil and might. We must support good and right. It is no sin to fight against these Muhammedan invaders.' So both fell upon the imperial army like tigers on a herd of cattle. They were followed by Sikh warriors.

Maimun Khan discharged arrow after arrow with mortal effect. Saiyad Beg cut down everyone who came to oppose him. After a time there occurred a severe single-handed combat between Saiyad Beg and

a hill chief. They attacked but repeatedly missed each other. At last Saiyad Beg struck off the hill chief's head. Seeing this, Din Beg, a general in the imperial army, rushed at Saiyad Beg. A fierce hand-to-hand fight ensued. At last Saiyad Beg was mortally wounded. He died repeating the Guru's and God's praises. The battle raged on in great fury. Though greatly outnumbered, the Sikhs held their ground admirably.

Now, Saiyad Khan general of the imperial army, was the brother of Sayyid Budhu Shah's wife. The couple were faithful followers of Guru Gobind Singh. We have already read about them and the part they played in the battle of Bhangani. From them Saiyad Khan had heard much of the Guru's great spiritual powers and lofty principles. He had been, therefore, a secret admirer of the Guru. On the battlefield he saw Musalmans, like Maimun Khan and Saiyad Beg, fighting in the foremost ranks of the Guru's army. This made a strong impression on him. He felt a desire to meet and submit to the Guru. But his pride as a general of the imperial army stood in his way. He had come to conquer the Guru. What would the world say if he submitted to one whom he had come to conquer and capture ?

The Guru knew what was passing in Saiyad Khan's mind. He decided to end his mental struggle. He smiled and advanced towards him. Saiyad Khan saw him. He decided to do his duty as the general of the imperial army. He aimed a shot against the Guru but missed. He had never missed before. He advanced

to be nearer the Guru. The Guru smiled once more and said, 'Try again, Saiyad Khan. I am so near you. I hear that you are a good shot.' Saiyad Khan fired another shot, but missed again. The Guru advanced still nearer, and said, 'Try once again, Saiyad Khan.' Saiyad Khan levelled his gun and took aim. But he could not pull the trigger. Saiyad Khan was perplexed. A shiver ran through his body. The Guru smilingly said again, 'Try once more. I am so near you now.'

He who had come to conquer was himself conquered. He got down from his horse. He went up to the Guru with folded hands. He knelt beside the Guru's horse and touched the Guru's stirrup with his forehead. He grasped the Guru's foot and said, 'I am your servant and slave. Accept me as such. I shall never fight against you.'

The Guru bade him rise. He rose with light in his eyes and joy and love in his heart. The Guru conferred on him the gift of true Name and the supreme reward of salvation. But unlike Saiyad Beg, Saiyad Khan did not actively assist the Sikhs. He fought no more against anyone. At the Guru's bidding, he retired to a lonely cave near Kangra. He passed his days there in thinking of God and the Guru. Later, when the Guru went to the Deccan, Saiyad Khan followed him and remained with him to the last.

After Saiyad Khan's having become the Guru's disciple, Ramzan Khan took command of the imperial army. He fought with great bravery against the Sikhs.

Seeing this, the Guru let fly an arrow at him. It killed his horse. The Guru, on closely observing the combat saw that the odds were too heavy against him. Hence he decided to evacuate the city of Anandpur. He retired to the fort. The Muhammedans plundered the city and the Guru's property. After that they proceeded in the direction of Sarhind. They encamped for the night a few kilometres away from Anandpur. They were in high spirits. A good half of the night they spent in feasting and merry-making. Then they lay down to sleep.

The Sikhs felt their defeat very keenly. They obtained the Guru's permission to fall upon the imperial army at night. The Guru's eldest son, Prince Ajit Singh was at their head. The Turks were taken unawares. A scene of wild confusion followed. Hundreds were killed by the Sikhs. Others fled in hot haste for their lives. All the booty which they had brought from Anandpur, as well as their own camp, fell into the hands of the Sikhs.

The Emperor called upon his fugitive troops to account for their cowardice and defeat. They pleaded that the Sikhs had waylaid and attacked them unawares. The Emperor then asked what sort of person the Guru was ? A soldier said, 'He is a young handsome man, a living saint, the father of his people, and in war equal to one lakh men.' The Emperor was much displeased on hearing this praise of the Guru. He ordered the soldier to be dismissed from service at once.

But he could not dismiss the soldier's words from his mind. They sank deep in his heart. They came to him again and again. In his heart of hearts he began to admit the Guru's great powers of body, mind and spirit. 'How good it would be !' thought he, 'if such a holy, strong man could be won over and made a follower of the Prophet. Otherwise, he will have to be done away with.'

## AURANGZEB'S INVITATION

The Emperor came to know how his army sent under Saiyad Khan and Ramzan Khan had fared. He was enraged to hear this. He declared that he would put an end to the Guru's life and activities. But the court Qazi advised him that the Guru should somehow be prevailed upon to come to the Emperor's court. 'It he can be won over,' added the Qazi, 'he will be an excellent and trustworthy ally.'

The Emperor accepted the Qazi's advice. It accorded well with his own secret, innermost feelings. He deputed the Qazi to convey the following message to the Guru, 'There is only one Emperor. You believe in one God, so do I. So your religion and mine are the same. I wish to meet and talk with you. Come to me without any hesitation. Otherwise, I shall be angry and come to you. If you come, you will be treated as holy men are treated by kings. I have obtained this sovereignty from God. You should not oppose my wishes.'

Guru Gobind Singh knew how Emperor Aurangzeb had treated his own father, brothers and their families.

He also knew how he had treated holy men like Guru Teg Bahadur. Hence, it was not wise to trust him. He thought, 'I can well imagine what sort of treatment the cruel, crafty king will give to me. It will be suicidal to fall into his hands.' Hence, he declined the invitation. He sent the following reply :

'My brother, the Sovereign who has made you Emperor has sent me into the world to do justice. He commissioned you also to do justice. But you have forgotten His orders. You practise hypocrisy. In persecuting non-Muslims you are acting unjustly. You are violating God's orders. What you are doing does not become a true believer in God. Hence, I would say that you do not believe in God. Until you desist from ill-treating God's children, I cannot meet or see you, I cannot seek friendly ties with you.'

When despatching this reply to the Emperor, the Guru conferred a robe of honour on the Emperor's messenger.

Raja Ajmer Chand and the other hill chiefs were deeply distressed to see that the glory and power of the Guru and his Sikhs were increasing, day by day. Then they heard how the imperial army under Saiyad Khan and Ramzan Khan had fared. This news made them still more nervous and restless. They began to fear that the Guru would soon deprive them of their kingdoms. They met together and decided to send another petition to the Emperor. In this petition they implored the Emperor to send a strong army under trustworthy generals to crush the Guru. They said that

the Guru was his foe as well as theirs. They assured him that they would join the imperial army with all their troops.

Raja Ajmer Chand undertook to go and present the petition to the Emperor. The latter was at that time in Deccan. Ajmer Chand proceeded thither to present the petition to him. By then the Emperor had received Guru Gobind Singh's reply to his invitation. That reply and the hill chiefs' petition made him feel that the Guru was becoming a real and powerful danger to the Mughal rule. So he ordered that all available troops under the nawabs or viceroys of Delhi, Sarhind and Lahore be despatched against Guru Gobind Singh. He also directed the hill chiefs to help the imperial army in every way.

The viceroy of Delhi said that he could spare no troops for the campaign against the Guru. The troops which he had were required for the defence and safety of the imperial capital. However, the viceroys of Sarhind and Lahore speedily marched towards Anandpur at the head of all their available troops. The two armies met at Ropar. The armies of the twenty-two hill chiefs also joined them at that place. The Ranghars and Gujjars of the locality also joined the invaders there.

The Guru was thus being faced with overwhelming odds. But he did not feel the least perturbed. He had unshakable faith in God, whose soldier he was. His Sikhs had full confidence in their Guru.

They were prepared to die fighting for him. So they boldly waited for the combined armies.

The invaders appeared in due course. The battle raged with great fury. The two viceroys were astonished to behold the slaughter of their soldiers at the hands of the Sikhs. They had counted on an easy victory. Nine hundred Muhammedans and about an equal number of hillmen were killed on the first day. The battle went on raging from day to day.

### BHAI GHANAEYYA

Among the Sikhs at Guru Gobind Singh's darbar there was one named Bhai Ghanaeeya. He was a resident of Sodra in the district of Gujranwala, now in Pakistan. He was a devout and peaceloving Sikh. He had a tender and compassionate heart. He was ever busy in doing whatever service he found a chance to do. Because of his love of peace and service, and his tender-heartedness, he was averse to becoming a soldier. Therefore, he had not joined the Guru's army of saint-soldiers by taking *amrit*. But he was not an idler or a coward. Whenever fighting took place, he would invariably go into the battlefield along with his co-workers. There he went about serving water and giving other help to the wounded.

At the conclusion of one day's fighting, some Sikhs appeared before the Guru and said, 'O true king, a Sikh named Ghanaeeya is helping the Turks, our enemies. We wound and fell them. He goes and gives them water and other help. He makes them well and fresh again. They are soon ready to fight



*Bhai Ghanaeeya. (Page 101)*

against us again. He is thus undoing our work. He is helping the enemy. He should be bidden to desist from doing this.'

On hearing this, the Guru sent for Bhai Ghanaeeya. He appeared before the Guru in no time. The Guru said to him, 'Ghanaeeya, what have you been doing ? I am told that you go about helping and serving the enemy. Is it true ?'

'No, true king,' said Bhai Ghanaeeya. 'I have never given any help or service to an enemy. My brothers here are mistaken.'

'O true king,' said the complaining Sikhs, 'we are not mistaken. He is telling a lie. With our own eyes we saw him giving water and help to our enemies.'

'Well, Ghanaeeya,' said the Guru with a smile, 'I know you very well. I do not believe you to be capable of telling a lie. But these my Sikhs here are also incapable of making false statements. Come, tell the truth.'

Bhai Ghanaeeya, replied, 'From their point of view, what my brothers here say is true. Yes, it is true that I have been giving water and help to those who are called Turks as freely as to those called Sikhs. But, in reality, I served no Turk or Sikh. I was serving you alone, O true king.'

'Me ?' said Guru Gobind Singh. 'How ?'

'Thus, O true king,' replied Bhai Ghanaeeya,

'you have told us, "if you clothe a naked person you clothe me. If you feed a hungry person, you feed me. If you give water to a thirsty man, you give water to me." These words of yours have been engraved on my heart. When I saw wounded soldiers, Sikhs and Muslims, lying on the ground, panting for water, I saw not them but you, O true king. I saw you in everyone of them. Hence, I gave water and help to none but you, my Lord.'

'Well done, Ghanaeeya,' said the Guru. 'You have been acting in the true Sikh spirit. As long as a Turk bears arms and fights against us, he is our enemy. But as soon as he falls wounded on the ground, he ceases to be our enemy. He is then only a man, a brother in need of help and care. Similarly, when he throws down his arms and runs away, he ceases to be our enemy. He becomes simply a man, a son of the Father above. He deserves help and sympathy. My Sikhs should help and serve the wounded, be they Sikhs or Turks. My Sikhs should not chase and harm those who surrender their arms or fly from the field of battle.'

The Guru then gave a pot of ointment to Bhai Ghanaeeya and said, 'Carry on the good work. In addition to giving water to the wounded, dress their wounds. Then take them to a safe place for further treatment. Do this and your name will live in the world. God will be highly pleased with you.'

It is said that the founder of the world-wide Red Cross Organisation took his inspiration from Bhai Ghanaeeya's story as told above.

## FAREWELL TO ANANDPUR

Aurangzeb had decided to put an end to Guru Gobind Singh's life and activities. Under his orders the viceroys of Sarhind and Lahore had attacked the Guru. All the hill chiefs had joined them with their armies. The Ranghars and Gujjars of the locality had also joined the attacking forces. The Sikhs had to face overwhelming odds. But they fought with wonderful firmness, bravery and skill.

The viceroys found their soldiers being killed in large numbers. After a time they lost all hope of being ever able to defeat the Sikhs in open battles. They decided to besiege the city, cut off all supplies, and thus force the Sikhs to surrender. They acted accordingly.

After a time the effects of the siege began to be felt in the fort. Those inside the fort began to starve. Elephants and horses died lingering deaths for want of food. Now and then, the Sikhs fell upon the enemy's camp at night, and took away some

supplies from there. But such supplies could not last long.

The Sikhs bore the hardships of the siege with patience and fortitude. But after a time they began to lose heart. They begged the Guru to evacuate the fort. But the Guru would not listen to any such proposal. Overcome by fatigue and hunger, some of the Sikhs threatened to desert the Guru.

The besiegers came to know of the discontent in the Guru's ranks. They decided to take timely advantage of it, and thus end the war. Two messengers—a Brahman and a Sayyid—were sent to the Guru. They were to say to him, ‘The hill chiefs and the Mughal viceroys swear by the cow and on the Quran, respectively, and give you the following promise : “If you evacuate the fort and go away, you will not be harmed in any way. You may even come back after a time.” We assure you that the oaths will be sincerely and fully kept.’

The messengers went to the Guru. They delivered the besiegers' message to him. They, too swore on the cow and the Quran that the besiegers were sincere in their offer.

But the Guru refused to put faith in these oaths. He said, ‘The hillmen have broken their oaths many a time in the past. As for the Mughal viceroys, they can be no better than their Emperor. Everyone knows, how he treated his father and brothers. I can trust neither the hill chiefs nor the Turks.’

A number of Sikhs were in favour of accepting the besiegers' offer. They went to the Guru's mother. They urged her to persuade him to accept the offer. She advised him accordingly. He tried to convince her that no reliance could be and should be placed on the besiegers' oaths. But she was not convinced. At last, he agreed to demonstrate the correctness of his opinion.

He said to the messengers, 'I shall evacuate the fort on one condition. The besiegers should first allow me to remove my movable property. Go back and get their consent.'

They went away and soon returned to inform the Guru of the besiegers' consent. The Guru said that he would send away his property during that night.

The messengers went away. Under the Guru's orders such things as old shoes, torn clothes, horse-dung, sweeping and rubbish of all sorts, were collected and packed in sacks. These sacks were to be the Guru's property intended to be removed. The sacks were covered with bright coloured cloth and loaded on the backs of bullocks. Thus loaded, the bullocks were led out of the fort at the dead of night. Burning torches were tied to their horns, so that their departure might be easily observed. As the bullocks approached the besiegers, they at once fell upon them to plunder the Guru's 'property'.

When they found what the sacks contained, they were filled with sadness and shame. They had broken their most solemn oaths and what had they got ?

The siege was continued. The condition of the besieged grew worse and worse every day. But they bore everything with fortitude and patience. Then came a letter in Aurangzeb's own handwriting. It said, 'I have sworn on the Quran not to harm you. If I do, I may not find a place in God's court thereafter ! Cease warfare and come to me. If you desire not to come hither, then go wheresoever you please. No harm shall be done to you.'

The letter was delivered to the Guru by a Qazi. The latter added that the hill-chiefs had also sworn by the cow that they would not harm the Guru in anyway. The Guru told the Qazi that he had no faith in the oaths and pledges of the hillmen and the Turks. They were sure to be broken.

The siege continued. The hardships of the besieged went on increasing. At last a group of Sikhs decided to go away against the Guru's wishes and advice. He said to them, 'All who want to leave should give in writing that I am not their Guru and they are not my Sikhs.' A large number wrote the disclaimer and went away.

After a time, the Guru's mother became in favour of going away with her daughter-in-law and grandsons. At last the Guru yielded to his mother's wishes. He agreed to evacuate the fort. He, his family, and his remaining Sikhs left the fort at the dead of night. The December night was pitch dark and bitterly cold. A piercing cold wind began to blow and soon it began to rain.

The besiegers learnt that the Guru and his Sikhs had evacuated the fort. They at once started after them, forgetting all their oaths and pledges. They overtook the Guru and his party near the bank of the Sarsa stream. The night was dark. A cold wind was blowing. The Sarsa was in flood. To cross it was very difficult.

The Turks fell upon the Sikhs. Severe fighting took place in the darkness and rain. Many Sikhs were killed. The rest succeeded in crossing the flooded stream. Much of the Guru's property, including many precious manuscripts, was washed away. In the confusion that ensued, the Guru's mother and his two younger sons got separated from the main party.\* The Guru, along with some of his Sikhs, proceeded towards Ropar. His wives, Mata Sundri and Mata Sahib Kaur, stayed in the house of a trusted Sikh at Ropar. They proceeded towards Delhi on the following day

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\*The story of what happened to them will be given in Book V.

in the company of that Sikh. The Guru started towards Chamkaur. At that time he had with him forty Sikhs besides his two elder sons—Baba Ajit Singh and Baba Jujhar Singh. His five Dear Ones were among the forty Sikhs.

## AT CHAMKAUR SAHIB

After evacuating Anandpur, Guru Gobind Singh proceeded towards Ropar. As he was moving on, he learnt that a large Mughal army lay a few miles off in front. He knew that the armies of the two viceroys were pursuing him. He was thus between two formidable armies. He had only forty Sikhs and his two elder sons with him. He decided to change his course and go to Chamkaur. On reaching there, he occupied a mud-built house or *haveli*. It was located on a high spot and was in the shape of a fortress. He posted soldiers to guard the four walls and the gate. With two Sikhs and his two sons the Guru held the top storey.

The Mughal armies arrived at nightfall. They surrounded the village. Early next day they began their attacks on the *haveli*. They were greeted, each time, with a volley of bullets and arrows. Each time they fell back after losing many of their soldiers. Two army officers, Nahar Khan and Gairat Khan, tried, in turn, to scale the wall. They were shot down by the Guru. Another officer, Mahmud Khan,

saved himself from the Guru's arrows by hiding behind a wall.

The imperial army then directed all their efforts towards forcing open the gate. As they moved in that direction, a number of Sikhs went out to oppose them and defend the gate. They fought valiantly and killed many of the attackers. At last, they were overpowered and slain. Then another batch of Sikhs came out and engaged the attackers as long as they could.

This went on for a good part of the day. Then there was a slight pause. The Sikhs took counsel and decided to request the Guru to make good his escape. 'If he goes,' said they, 'he can raise thousands to carry on the fight for the sacred cause.' So they went to him to make the appeal. They found that the Guru's eldest son, Baba Ajit Singh, was standing with folded hands before the Guru. He was beseeching the Guru for permission to go out and check the enemy's advance in the next attack. 'Dear father,' they heard him saying, 'you have named me Ajit or Unconquerable. I shall not be conquered. If overpowered, I shall die fight like my brother Sikhs.'

The Guru embraced and kissed his eldest son for the last time. He then bade him go unto certain death. The Sikhs fell on their knees before the Guru and begged him to save himself and his two sons. But the Guru did not agree to do so.

Baba Ajit Singh, who was hardly eighteen, bade farewell to his father, younger brother and his brother Sikhs. Five Sikhs accompanied him. The attackers came on. They were engaged by Baba Ajit Singh and his five companions. Many of the attackers were killed in hand-to-hand fights. At last the six brave warriors were overcome and killed.

The Guru had been watching his son from the top storey, admiring and rejoicing at his daring, bravery and skill. When he saw him fall, he thanked God that his son had proved worthy of His cause.

The Guru's second son, Baba Jujhar Singh, now made the same request as his elder brother had made. The Guru took him in his lap. He kissed and patted him. Then he gave him a sword and a shield. 'Go, my son,' said the Guru, 'and join your grandfather and elder brother. Go and wait for me there.'

Thus armed, this lad of fourteen years went out to face thousands of hardy, well-trained, and far better-armed Mughal soldiers. Five Sikhs accompanied him. Baba Jujhar Singh fought as valiantly as his elder brother had done. Many stalwarts fell before the sword of that child-warrior. Then he was overpowered. He died fighting to the last.

The Guru had been watching and admiring Baba Jujhar Singh's wonderful performance. When he fell,

the Guru thanked God that his second son had proved worthy of His cause.

The gate was attacked and defended in this way throughout the day. At night the Mughal army lay down to take rest. By then, besides the Guru's two sons, three of his five Dear Ones (*Piaras*) had been killed. Their names were Bhai Mukham Singh, Bhai Sahib Singh and Bhai Himmat Singh. Thirty-two others Sikhs had also fallen. He was left with only five Sikhs.

The five remaining Sikhs took counsel and said to the Guru, 'We beg you to make good your escape. You will create thousands of Khalsa warriors. The Khalsa will destroy the cruel, Godless tyrants.' The Guru shook his head. The Sikhs then said, 'O true king, at the time of creating your Khalsa, you declared, "The Guru is the Khalsa, the Khalsa is the Guru." We, as the Guru Khalsa, order you to go. We hope you will excuse our assuming this role.'

The Guru was left with no alternative. He had to obey the Guru Khalsa. He seated his five Sikhs near him and proceeded to entrust the Guruship to them. Then he said, 'After me the Khalsa Panth shall be the Guru under the guidance of Guru Granth Sahib. Wherever five Sikhs assemble and remember me, I shall be with them. They shall be the priests of priests. Whenever a Sikh

breaks any rule of the Khalsa conduct, five Sikhs can give him baptism and grant him pardon.'

Saying this, the Guru went round them thrice. Then he laid his plume and crest in front of them, offered them his arms, bowed before them, and cried out, '*Sri Wahiguru ji ka Khalsa, Sri Wahiguru ji ki Fateh.*'

- The Guru Khalsa further decided that three Sikhs—Bhai Daya Singh, Bhai Dharam Singh and Bhai Man Singh—should accompany the Guru. Two Sikhs—Bhai Sant Singh and Bhai Sangat Singh were to remain in the *haveli*. They were to hold it as long as there was life in their bodies.

The Guru and his three companions left the *haveli* at the dead of night. It was pitch dark. Thick clouds covered the sky, here and there. There were occasional flashes of lightning. As they proceeded, Bhai Daya Singh said, 'O true king, here lies the body of Baba Ajit Singh.' The Guru looked at the body, blessed his martyred son, and proceeded on. A moment later, Bhai Daya Singh said, 'Here lies the body of Baba Jujhar Singh.' The Guru looked in that direction, blessed his martyred son, and walked on. Bhai Daya Singh then said, 'O true king, I have a sheet over me. I wish to tear it into two pieces and cover with them the bodies of the two young martyrs.'

The Guru said, 'The idea is good and noble. You have my permission, but on one condition. You should first cover the bodies of my thirty five martyred Sikhs. They are my sons in spirit, and equally dear to me. Then you may cover the bodies of these two martyrs who are my sons in flesh.'

Bhai Daya Singh could make no reply. He bowed and held his tongue. They proceeded on their risky course.

## UCHCH KA PIR

Guru Gobind Singh and his three companions left Chamkaur Sahib at the dead of a December night. The Guru pointed to a star and said to his companions, 'We shall proceed in the direction of that star.' Because of pitch darkness, the Guru got separated from his three companions. He travelled barefooted. His path lay through wild land covered with thick thorny bushes. His feet got pierced with thorns. Blisters also appeared on them. His clothes got torn by getting entangled with the thorny bushes. The night was pitch dark. A bitter cold wind was blowing fast. Under the circumstances he could not make much progress.

A short time before dawn he reached near a village named Kheri. There he was recognized by two *Gujjars*. They raised an alarm. He was forced to kill them. As the imperial army was after him, he could travel only by night. During the day he rested among clusters of thorny bushes. He had nothing to eat but the tender leaves of the *akk* plant. He had nothing but a clod of earth to rest his head on. But amid all these hardships the Guru's heart and mind were as firm and strong as

ever. When he lay down to sleep, his hands always grasped his drawn sword.

The Guru was travelling through the Machhiwara forest. Feeling exhausted, he lay down to take rest. His three companions had travelled in the direction of the star pointed out to them by the Guru. They reached the same spot. They found him sleeping with an earthen waterpot for his pillow. They awakened him. They told him that the imperial army was in hot pursuit. It might be on them at any time. But he could not walk as his feet were blistered and painful. He told his Sikhs to go and take shelter in a neighbouring garden. But how could they go leaving him there? Bhai Man Singh took him on his back and carried him to a well in that garden. There he took water and bathed for the first time after many days. He felt much refreshed.

The garden belonged to Gulaba Masand, a resident of Machhiwara. He heard of the Guru's presence in his garden. He hurried to meet the Guru and offer him his services. He took the Guru and his companions to his house. He lodged them in the upper storey. But, as the imperial army was after him, it was not safe for the Guru stay there for long. He had to move on somehow.

In that village there lived two Pathan brothers named Ghani Khan and Nabi Khan. They had been

in the Guru's service for some time. They heard of his being in their village. They also heard of the risky situation in which he then was. They decided to help him. They went to him and offered their services. They said, 'O true king, permit us to carry you to a safe place.'

While the Guru was in Gulaba's house an old Sikh lady, named Gurdevi, came to see him. She had been spinning and weaving cloth for him. She had been, at the same time, praying that he might be pleased to visit her village to accept it. On hearing of the Guru's presence in her village, she brought and offered that cloth to him. He got it dyed blue. He got it made into a robe and a sheet. He thus got prepared a dress like the one worn by a sect of Muslim fakirs.

The Guru put on that robe and sheet. Thus disguised, he was borne in a litter. It was lifted in front by Ghani Khan and Nabi Khan and by Man Singh and Bhai Dharam Singh in rear. Bhai Daya Singh waved a *chauri*. Whoever questioned them was informed that they were escorting the *Uchch ka pir*. The expression *Uchch ka pir* meant either a high saint or the Holy Saint of Uchch, a well-known Muhammedan sacred place near Multan.

They travelled on in this way without any mishap. One day, however, they were overtaken by a detachment of the imperial army which had been searching for the Guru. Its commander suspected that the *Uchch ka Pir* was no other than Guru Gobind Singh. He ques-



*He is a high saint in union with Allah. (page 122)*

tioned the bearers of the litter closely and long. He was not satisfied with their answers. He sent for Qazi Pir Muhammad, who had been once the Guru's Persian tutor. He asked the Qazi to identify the occupant of the litter. The Qazi said, "Don't stop this great and holy personage. Don't put him to any inconvenience. He is a high saint in a union with Allah. Let him proceed unmolested." The commander was satisfied. He made apologies to the *Uchch ka Pir* for having suspected and inconvenienced him. He begged him to go whither he pleased. For this timely service the Qazi was given a *hukmnama* or letter of recommendation addressed to Sikhs in general. It was highly prized by the Qazi and his descendants.

Thus escorted, the Guru proceeded towards Hehar in the Ludhiana district. In that village lived Mahant Kirpal Das. He was the same Udasi Mahant who had distinguished himself in the battle of Bhangni. He welcomed the Guru most devoutly and cordially. Ghani Khan and Nabi Khan were permitted to go back home. They were given a pair of gold bracelets and a *hukmnama*. In that *hukmnama* it was written that Ghani Khan and Nabi Khan were dearer to the Guru than his own sons.

Mahant Kirpal Das was eager to serve the Guru. But he had heard the imperial orders against helping or sheltering the Guru. He feared lest some local official should come to know of the Guru's stay at his house. The Guru read his mind. He decided to move on. Mahant Kirpal Das acted as one of the bearers of

Guru's litter for some miles. Then he was allowed to go back.

From Hehar the Guru moved on to Jatpura. There he was met by a Muhammedan named Rai Kalha. He was a rich and important person and the Chaudhri of Jagraon and Rai Kot. He was a devout admirer of the Guru. He knew of the imperial orders against helping or sheltering the Guru. But that knowledge did not deter him from serving the Guru. He took him to his house and treated him with most loving hospitality. The Guru stayed with Rai Kalha for many days.

## DINA AND MUKTSAR

The Mughal armies were marching about in search of Guru Gobind Singh. The Emperor had issued an order that none should help or shelter Guru. All the same, daring devotees of the Guru received, entertained and help him. Such devotees were not only Sikhs, but also Mohammedans.

After leaving Machhiwara, the Guru visited Hehar. From there he moved on to Jatpura. There he was lovingly served by a Muhammedan chaudhri named Rai Khalha. After a short stay at Jatpura, the Guru moved on to Dina. At that place he was lovingly served by three brothers named Shamira, Lakhmira and Takht Mal. The Nawab of Sarhind learnt about this. He sent strict orders to Shamira, telling him to arrest and surrender the Guru. Shamira ignored the orders.

Thereupon Wazir Khan, Nawab of Sarhind, decided to march in pursuit of the Guru. Rumours of the Nawab's decision reached Dina. The Guru was prepared to face and fight the Nawab. But he thought, 'If the fighting takes place near this or any other

village, the inhabitants will be put to much unnecessary trouble.' Hence, he decided to move into the fastness of the jungle.

After passing through a number of villages, he reached Jaito. There he learnt that Nawab Wazir Khan of Sarhind was coming thither with a force of five thousand. He was expected to reach there in four or five days. The Guru decided to move on to near Khidrana. His plan was to face the Mughal army near the lake.

It has been told already that a few hundred Sikhs deserted the Guru during the siege of Anandpur. Before leaving, they wrote the disclaimer, putting down on paper that he was not their Guru and they were not his Sikhs. These deserters belonged to all parts of the country. Some of them were killed on the way, while others were able to reach their homes.

Forty of the deserters who could reach their homes belonged to the Majha tract of the Panjab. When they reached their homes, they were shamed by their own women. The latter did not let them enter their homes. They said, 'Go back to the Guru and make amends for your cowardly conduct. Otherwise exchange your dress with ours, stay at home, and act as housewives, in our place. Dressed in your clothes we will go and fight and die for the Guru. In that way, we shall wash away with our blood the shame which your conduct has brought on the Sikhs of the Majha.'

The deserters from the Majha decided to go back. This band of forty fully armed Saint-Soldiers started towards the Guru. Mai Bhago of Jhabal also joined them. She and Bhai Mahan Singh of Sursingh were the leaders of this band. They had to move cautiously. If they had marched together as a *jatha*, they might have been captured. So they travelled in small groups, mostly by night, and by unfrequented routes. Along the way, quite a large number of Sikhs joined them.

The party reached near Khidrana. They learnt that the Guru had shortly before gone over to the other side of the lake. They also learnt that Wazir Khan's army was approaching. It was expected there soon. On reaching Khidrana, they found it almost dry. Bhai Mahan Singh proposed to engage the enemy there. The Guru would, thereby, get time to reach some safe place.

His proposal was accepted. Wide white sheets of *khaddar* were spread on shrubs. They looked like so many tents. The sight of them was sure to make the enemy believe that the Sikhs were encamping there in large numbers.

The Muhammedan army arrived soon. Long and bloody was the battle which ensued. The Sikhs fought with their usual courage and power. Mai Bhago was fighting in the foremost rank. The Guru had reached a sand-hill on the other side of Khidrana. From there he directed a constant rain of arrows at the most pro-

minent officers and soldiers of the Muhammedan army. A large number fell, pierced by the arrows. The army made repeated attacks on the Sikhs. Each time it had to go back after suffering heavy losses.

At last the Sikh's stock of ammunition and arrows was exhausted. They were obliged to have recourse to their spears and swords. They advanced in small groups. They engaged the enemy and killed several times their own number. They went on wielding their weapons most effectively until they were overpowered and cut down. They were not fighting for victory. They had no thought of saving their lives. Their only wish was to win the Guru's pardon and pleasure. Their only aim at the time was to check as long as possible, the enemy's advance against the Guru. In time, all of them lay on the ground. About three thousand Turks lay with them on the same bloody field. The Mughal army then decided to go back.

After the Muhammedan army had gone, the Guru visited the scene of the battle. With fatherly affection he lifted the heads of the martyrs into his lap, one by one, wiped their faces, and blessed them. In due time it was Bhai Mahan Singh's turn to be thus caressed and blessed. The Guru found that still there was some life in him. After a time he opened his eyes. He found himself in the Guru's lap and arms. He was filled with immense joy. The Guru asked him if he had any wish to be fulfilled. 'No, father,' replied Bhai Mahan Singh. 'I have seen you. I die for your cause, in your lap and

with your blessings. What else or more could I desire ? But father, if you have taken compassion on us here, tear off our disclaimer, the paper on which we and others wrote, "You are not our Guru, we are not your Sikhs." Tear it off and let broken ties be reunited.'

The Guru was highly pleased to hear Bhai Mahan Singh's last wish. He blessed him and said, 'You have done a great deed. You have saved the root of Sikhism in the Majha. You and your companions, all forty of you, are *Muktas*—the Saved Ones. You are delivered from the chain of births and deaths forever.' Saying this, he took out the disclaimer from under his belt, tore it into tiny pieces, and threw them all away. Bhai Mahan Singh saw this. He felt immensely relieved. He smiled took a long, deep breath, and closed his eyes forever.

Then the Guru went on to the place where Mai Bhago was lying senseless. She had not been severely wounded. She had fallen down out of utter exhaustion. A little aid revived her. The Guru was greatly pleased with what she had done. He got her removed from the battlefield. Her wounds were treated and healed. When she was all right, she was baptized. She became Mai Bhag Kaur.

Mai Bhag Kaur, dressed in male dress, remained in the Guru's service to the end. Along with ten Sikhs, she used to guard the Guru's bed during his sleep. When the Guru died, she went to Bidar. She lived there till the end of her earthly life.

## RETURN TO THE ETERNAL HOME

After the battle of Muktsar the Guru continued his onward journey. After passing through many villages, he made quite a long halt in the Lakhi jungle. Religious gatherings were held there every day, morning and evening. Sikhs from far and near came in their hundreds and thousands. Hundreds were baptized and made members of the Khalsa. Among those baptized at that place was a Muslim fakir named Ibrahim. After baptism, he became Ajmer Singh. He was the first Muhammedan to be baptized. He accompanied the Guru in his further journey.

Leaving the Lakhi jungle, and passing through many villages, the Guru reached Talwandi Sabo, now called Damdama Sahib or the Sacred Resting Place. He stayed there for over nine months with an influential Sikh named Dalla. He made it a great seat of learning. It is often called the Guru's Kashi. While at Damdama Sahib, the Guru gave the final form to the Holy Granth.

Leaving Damdama Sahib, Guru Gobind Singh continued his journey to the Deccan. Some time after, Emperor Aurangzeb died at his camp in Ahmednagar. His sons began to fight for the throne. Bahadur Shah, who was the eldest, requested the Guru for help in the war of succession. The Guru helped him with a detachment of his selected soldiers under the command of Bhai Dharam Singh. He also sent an order to the Khalsa to render all help to Bahadur Shah, who was a good man.

Bahadur Shah won the war of succession. He became the Emperor. He invited the Guru to Agra. He received him with great honour. He presented him with a rich robe of honour and a jewelled scarf (*dhukhduki*) worth sixty thousand rupees.

The Emperor had to march to the Deccan. He requested the Guru to accompany him. The Guru accompanied the Emperor for a long time. At every place of halt, he separated himself from the royal camp to preach his mission to the people. He made many converts at all places. After some time, he separated from Bahadur Shah for good and proceeded towards Nander.

At that place, near the bank of the river Godavari, there was the *ashram* of a *Bairagi* monk, named Madho Das. The *Bairagi* possessed great magical powers. With their help he used to play practical jokes on those who came to see him.

When Guru Gobind Singh reached the said *ashram* the *Bairagi* was away. The Guru went in and occupied the *Bairagi's* couch. He told his Sikhs to kill one of the *Bairagi's* goats and cook it for dinner. One of the *Bairagi's* disciples ran to inform him of the visitor and his conduct. The *Bairagi* flew into a rage. With his magical powers he tried to overturn the couch occupied by the Guru. But he failed to do so. He had never failed before. He went to the *ashram*. There he made another effort at magic. But he failed again. Then he went before the Guru. The following dialogue took place between them :

*Madho Das* : Who are you ?

*Guru Gobind Singh* : He whom you know.

*Madho Das* : What do I know ?

*Guru Gobind Singh* : Think it over.

*Madho Das* : (after a pause) : So you are Guru Gobind Singh.

*Guru Gobind Singh* : Yes.

*Madho Das* : What have you come here for ?

*Guru Gobind Singh* : I have come to make you my disciple.

*Madho Das* : I submit. I am your Banda (slave).

Saying this, he fell at the Guru's feet. The Guru instructed Banda in the tenets of Sikhism. In due course he baptized him. On taking the *amrit*, Madho Das became Banda Singh. In Sikh history he is popularly

known as Banda Bahadur.\* After a time the Guru sent him to the Panjab as the leader of the Khalsa.

Now, Wazir Khan, Nawab of Sarhind, was still an enemy of the Guru. He had been responsible for most of the Guru's sufferings. He became alarmed to learn that Guru Gobind Singh's relations with Bahadur Shah were growing closer, day by day. He knew what would happen to him if peace were made between the Emperor and the Sikhs. It was believed that the Guru had a special object in accompanying the Emperor. That object was to get Wazir Khan, murderer of his sons, duly punished. Already the Emperor had shown an inclination to help the Guru at the expense of Wazir Khan. He had granted a *firman* in favour of the Guru upon Wazir Khan for payment of three hundred rupees a day. Wazir Khan was, therefore, in fear of his life. He feared that the Guru might succeed in prevailing upon the Emperor to punish him for his cruel, murderous acts. He could not feel secure until he had killed the Guru. He, therefore, planned to get the Guru murdered.

He hired two young Pathans and deputed them to murder the Guru. They pursued him secretly on his journey to the Deccan. They came to Nander. They paid occasional visits to the Guru. Thus they became acquainted with the Guru and his attendant Sikhs. One day, after the evening service, one of the Pathans went near the bed on which the Guru was taking rest. The

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\*The story of his deeds and sacrifices will be told in Book V and VI.

Guru gave him *Parsad* (some sweets), which he devoured at once. Then he took his seat near the bed. After a time the Guru had a nap. His sole attendant also happened to be sleepy. The Pathan saw his chance. He sprang to his feet, drew his sword, and stabbed the Guru in the left side. Before he could deal another blow, he was cut down by the Guru with his sword. Then the Guru called out to his Sikhs. Many Sikhs came running. The Pathan's companion tried to escape, but he fell under the sword of the Sikhs who had come upon hearing the noise.

The Guru's wound was immediately sewn up. In a few days it appeared to have healed up. But one day he tried to bend a stiff bow which a Sikh had brought for him. His imperfectly healed wound burst open. It began to bleed profusely. The Guru felt that the end of his earthly life was near. He had already conferred the Guruship on the Khalsa at Chamkaur Sahib. That was about secular affairs. He had then said there was to be no personal Guru after him. Regarding matters religious and spiritual, he now formally conferred the Guruship on the Holy Granth. Having placed five pice and a coconut before the Sacred Granth, he went round it thrice and then bowed before it.

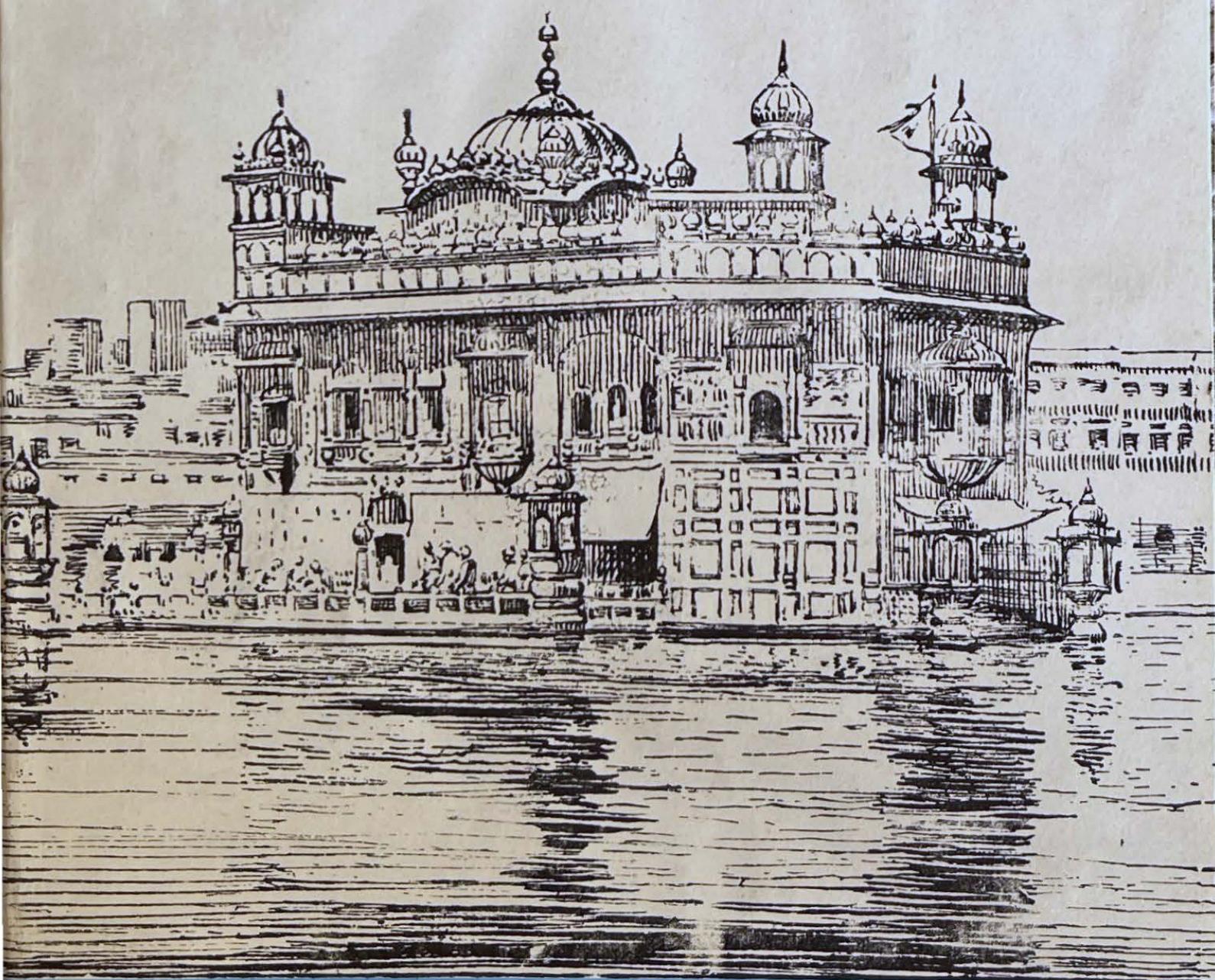
Then he addressed his parting message to his Sikhs. He said, 'The system of personal Gurus ends with me. There will be no eleventh or twelfth Guru of the Sikhs. Such are orders of the Father. The Panth will guide itself by the teachings of the Gurus as incorporated in Guru Granth Sahib. Whenever you need my advice

or guidance, gather in the presence of Granth Sahib, and discuss and decide things in the light of the Guru's teachings embodied therein. Whenever a group of my Sikhs remembers me with true hearts and my pure minds, I shall ever be in their midst. Love the Word. Love and serve the Panth. Preserve the Khalsa uniform, the Khalsa identity, and the Khalsa principles.

Then he lay down and returned to the Eternal Home from where he had come. This happened on October 7, 1708 A.D. He was then less than forty-two years of age.



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## A WORD TO THE READER

In Book V of *Stories from Sikh History* you will read about some of your noble and glorious ancestors who passed through the portals of Death to achieve everlasting life. They gave up their lives on this earth and returned to the Abode of God, to live there for all times to come. Yet they will live also on this earth as long as the noble cause for which they lived and accepted death persists and flourishes; for, as it has been rightly said :

*'In the wreck of noble lives  
Something immortal still survives.'*

The pages that follow will tell you what strong, ever-brilliant metal your glorious ancestors were made of. They loved and lived in God. They loved all mankind, whom they looked upon as children of the dear common Father of all. Yet some misguided people, drunk with power and blinded by fanatic zeal, chose to believe that God was a monopoly of theirs alone; that what they thought of Him was the only Truth for all mankind. For them all dissents were *kufar* or Falsehood. They tolerated nothing of the sort. They had taken a vow to mend or end everyone who did not subscribe to their own narrow idea of God and His Will. They were determined to make their own religion the only religion of the land over which they ruled. To all who shared not their faith, they offered the choice between apostacy and death. To all such *kafirs* they said, 'Give up your *kufar*, your faith, or give up your life.'

Your ancestors of whom you will read in the following pages were all offered the above choice. They made their choice without even a minutes hesitation. They stuck to that choice to the very end. They were firm as rocks in their faith and choice. Even the wildest storms failed to shake them. They were persons of strong, unconquerable will; temptations, most alluring and charming, were placed in their way. Offers of every sort of earthly joys and pleasures were made to them in wild profusion. They disdained even to look at any of them. They firmly refused to be enticed by them. They spurned and rejected them all without even the slightest hesitation. Why ? Because the price asked for those joys and pleasures was to

them most abominable and absurd. What they were called upon to give in return for those tempting joys and pleasures was such as they could never even dream of parting with ; it was what they cherished as far more dear and precious than all that their temptors could offer to or provide for them. They were asked to give up their faith, to become and live as apostates. They resolutely refused to do so, come what might. They were not ensnared. They did not yield to those most charming, alluring temptations.

Then they were threatened with most terrifying and humanly unbearable tortures leading to death. They were told to choose between apostacy and tortures leading to death. But all such threats did not have even the least effect on them. They remained firm and unshaken. They feared neither tortures nor death. They abhorred the very idea of living in apostacy. Death to them was dearer than such a life.

Consequently, they were subjected to untold, unheard of sufferings and tortures. They bore everything with wonderful patience and calm, nay, even with manifest joy. Their conduct was miraculous indeed. It was all a miracle of the type that men of God have been known to perform in all ages. What greater miracles can one imagine than the wonderful manner in which your ancestors bore all these tortures ?

While they were being tortured most mercilessly, they were again and again asked and urgently advised to save themselves by giving up their faith. Each time they shook their heads and told their torturers to carry on and finish their job. They chose to suffer and die. They gave up their lives, but they did not give up their faith. They preferred most torturous deaths to pleasant and possessive life of apostacy. They died to live for ever. They became martyrs. They became immortal. They said, 'We came from God and we are going back to God, and we shall not have any gaps of death in the middle of our lives. Such death as your tortures will bring to us is most welcome and lovable. It will end the period of our separation from our Father.'

Yes, they died to live as immortal martyrs. They live for us, they will live for all times and for all generations to come. They will be so many sources of inspiration for us all, ever reminding us of our duty, ever endowing us with courage and strength to perform that duty well and faithfully.

## A NOTE ABOUT THE REVISED EDITION

A few words have to be said about this revised edition of the Book. The story of Guru Teg Bahadur's tours and martyrdom given here, in the revised edition, is different in some respects from that given in the original edition. The change was necessary because some facts have since come to light about these events. The account as given in the original edition was based on the generally accepted popular version. But our great and indefatigable research scholar, Dr. Ganda Singh, has dug out fresh information from many original and most trustworthy sources, which has to be accepted as correct ; and, consequently, the generally accepted popular version has to be modified a good deal. He has set out his valuable findings in an article entitled *The Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur*, published in the February 1976 issue of the *The Journal of Sikh Studies*. I have drawn upon that article and re-written the account of the Guru' tours and martyrdom. I express my thanks to the great research scholar and the editor of the Journal.

1 Canal Colony  
Amritsar.

Kartar Singh

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## SIKH MARTYRS

### I

#### Guru Arjan Dev

( 1 )

Guru Arjan Dev was the fifth Guru of the Sikhs. He was the first Sikh Martyr. He is generally known as the 'Prince among Martyrs'. Now, what is meant by the word 'martyr' ? To whom is it applied ? A martyr is a person who is punished with death for refusing to give up his faith. A person who bears sufferings or sacrifices his life, for a great cause, is also called a martyr. Guru Arjan Dev is called a martyr, because he went through untold bodily sufferings for the noble cause of freedom of faith and worship; because he condemned the rulers and the rich for their tyranny, over the people; because he aroused in the people's heart a sense of dignity and self-respect, and because he refused to give up his faith and embrace Islam. Because of all that, he was ordered to be killed 'with tortures'. He was then killed with inhuman tortures.

Now, who gave those orders ? Under what circumstances did he give the orders ? How and by whom were the orders carried out ? What tortures were given to the Guru ? How did he bear them ? This is narrated below.

Guru Arjan Dev took up his duties as the fifth Guru in September 1581 A.D. At that time Akbar was the Emperor of India. He was a pious, kind-hearted and liberal-minded man. He was not a fanatic or bigoted Muslim. He treated all his subjects in the same manner. He wanted that all his subjects, Muslims as well as non-Muslims, should be equal citizens of his empire. His aim was to make his empire a secular State. All religions were to be treated alike. Islam was to be only one of the religions in the empire. The law of Islam was not to be the law of the land.

Akbar had a very favourable and high opinion about the Sikhs and their Gurus. He took special pains to meet and befriend them.

Akbar was succeeded by his son, Jahangir, in October 1605 A.D. He was altogether different from his father. He was not pious, kind-hearted, or liberal-minded. He changed the religious policy of the empire. He made Islam the law of the land. The qazis became the law-givers. They were all fanatic and bigoted. They believed that their own religion was the only true religion. In their view all other religions were false. All such religions were, to them, forms of falsehood or *kufar*. Their followers were called '*kafirs*' or infidels, worshippers of falsehood. The qazis believed that '*kafirs*' had no right to live or even exist in a Muslim State. In their opinion, the law of Islam required that all non-Muslim subjects must be converted to Islam or killed. Those who accepted Islam, were given special favours and concessions. Those who did not give up their faith were subjected to all sorts of hardships.

Guru Arjan Dev's martyrdom was a result of this religious policy of Jahangir.

( 2 )

As said before, Guru Arjan Dev took up his duties in September 1581. He was a great organizer and an able administrator. He set about organizing and uniting the Sikhs, increasing their number, and improving their position. His manifold activities infused public spirit in the Sikh community.

Right from the time of Guru Nanak, Hindus as well as Muhammadans, had been accepting the Sikh faith of their own accord and free will. They had been drawn into the Sikh fold charmed by the life and teachings of the Gurus. The conversion of Muslims to Sikhism was not liked by the Muslim rulers and the qazis. Under Guru Arjan Dev's influence also, not only Hindus, but also Muslims too in large numbers, were becoming Sikhs.

The rapid development of the Sikhs at this time, and the ever-growing influence of Guru Arjan Dev, annoyed Jahangir and his qazis. Their annoyance was only natural. They aimed at converting all non-Muhammadans to Islam. But they found that, under Guru Arjan Dev's influence, Muslims were giving up their own faith and embracing Sikhism. This they could never tolerate. It had to be checked. An end had to be put to Guru Arjan Dev's life and activities.

Emperor Jahangir came to the throne in October 1605. Guru Arjan Dev had been carrying on his work since September 1581, that is, for over twenty-four years. He had achieved brilliant success. The qazis and other fanatic Muhammadans were furious. They

would, now and again, meet the Emperor and complain to him against the Guru. They said, 'In Goindwal, which is on the bank of the river Beas in the Panjab, there is a religious teacher named (Guru) Arjan. He is looked upon as a holy saint. He has a great following. He preaches a religion which is opposed to Islam. It is called Sikhism. He has become very popular. Not only Hindus, but even Muslims, are being charmed and captured by his ways, life, and teachings. From all sides crowds of people—Hindus and Muslims—flock to him. They express devotion to and faith in him. They give up their own religion. They embrace the religion preached by him. Muslims in large numbers have become his followers or Sikhs. More and more are doing so every day. All this is happening in the empire of a Muslim Emperor. It is very sad and saddening. It is your duty to stop this. We appeal to you to do your duty towards Islam.'

Jahangir, as a matter of fact, was of the same view. As he says in his Memoirs called *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, he had been having the same thoughts for many years. 'For many years,' writes he, 'the thought had been coming into my mind that I should either put an end to his (Guru Arjan's) life and activities, or bring him into the fold of Islam.' He assured the qazis and others that he would do this at the first suitable opportunity.

Emperor Jahangir had thus clearly and finally made up his mind to convert or kill Guru Arjan Dev. He was on the look-out for a suitable chance or excuse to carry out that resolve.

That chance came to him about six months after his having occupied the throne.

Jahangir was, as said above, waiting for a chance or excuse to carry out his evil design against Guru Arjan Dev. He got the long-sought chance in the rebellion of his eldest son, Khusrau. He did not want to miss it. He jumped at it.

Prince Khusrau had been Akbar's favourite. Akbar had wished that Khusrau should be the Emperor after him. But Jahangir managed to get the throne. Prince Khusrau rose in rebellion against his father, Jahangir. But he was defeated. He fled towards Lahore. He was pursued by Jahangir himself. During his march from Agra to Lahore, Jahangir made enquiries to find out who had helped or sympathized with his rebel son. He punished all those who were reported to have shown any interest in Khusrau. For example, Sheikh Nazam of Thanesar was reported to have prayed for Khusrau's success and welfare. He was exiled and sent to Mecca.

Emperor Jahangir passed through the tract of the Majha. He even stopped at Goindwal, where the Guru was supposed to be residing at the time. He passed by Tarn Taran, where Guru Arjan was then actually staying. But no complaint reached his ears at these places about the Guru's having helped Khusrau in any way. If the Guru had even met the rebel Prince, the fact would have been known to the Emperor's officials, qazis and others. They would not have failed to bring the matter to his notice. Moreover, the Guru had a number of enemies. They would have eagerly hurried to meet the Emperor and reported against the Guru.

But the Emperor received no report against Guru Arjan Dev anywhere, from official or non-official sources.

All this clearly shows that Guru Arjan Dev had not met or helped Khusrau.

The Emperor reached Lahore without having received any report or complaint against Guru Arjan Dev. Khusrau was captured from the bank of the Chenab. He was brought to Lahore. His helpers and companions were all put to death. His eyes were sewn and he was imprisoned for life. About a month passed in this way. Even during this period, no report or complaint was received against Guru Arjan Dev.

After having punished Khusrau and his friends, Jahangir got ready to leave Lahore. It was at that time that a report was made to him against the Guru. It was reported that the Guru had befriended the rebel Prince. Here is what the Emperor wrote about it in his Memoirs :

'At that time Khusrau crossed the river and passed that way (that is, by Goindwal). That foolish fellow resolved to secure the Guru's services. He encamped at that place where the Guru resided. He met him and talked of past affairs with him. With his finger he (Guru Arjan) made on the Prince's forehead a saffron mark called *tilak*. This mark is considered by the Hindus to be a sign of good luck. I fully knew his *kufar* or false beliefs and false propaganda. When this matter was reported to me, I ordered that he should be brought into my presence, that his houses

and children be made over to Murtza Khan, that his property should be confiscated, and that he should be put to death with tortures.

In accordance with these orders of the Emperor, his men went to Amritsar in order to arrest the Guru and take him to Lahore.

( 4 )

On seeing Jahangir's men and learning of their object, the Sikhs became afraid and sad. They approached the Guru and said, 'O True King, when Sulhi Khan came to attack you, you prayed to God. Your prayer was accepted. Sulhi Khan fell from his horse and was reduced to ashes in a kiln. Do the same now, O true King. Pray to God. He will accept your prayer. He will punish your enemies. He will save you.'

The Guru replied, 'No, my dear Sikhs. The times now are different. My duty now is different. My prayer now must also be different. Baba Nanak has said : "Those who are eager to follow my path of love, should be ever prepared to die most readily and joyously. They should first place their heads on their palms, and then enter the lane leading to my adobe. Only those should enter this path who can part with their heads without the least hesitation or fear."

'I entered Baba Nanak's path knowing full well what was expected of me. Shall I be found wanting ? I must not hesitate to die. Moreover, I have done no wrong to anybody. Jahangir has no case against me. I have never 'converted' any Muslim or Hindu. I have never asked or persuaded anyone to enter the Sikh

fold. People come, they see and hear, and they accept the Faith. Why should the Emperor object ? Why should he be angry ? People should be free to choose their faith and form of worship. Different religions are really different paths leading to the Abode of God. But the Emperor is out to deny freedom of faith and worship to his subjects. That is not proper. I would attempt to change this. I shall let myself be tortured and killed. The story of my tortures and of the manner in which I bear them will have a wholesome effect on the Emperor. He will change for the better, I hope.

'Moreover, I have been telling people to accept even His bitterest Will with joy. I must practise what I teach and preach. I am glad that God is granting me an opportunity do that. I must hail and accept it. The tale of my tortures will arouse the people. They will feel an urge for effecting a change. It will fill them with a firm resolve to end the rule under which such things are made to happen. They will rise to assert their rights. My son, Guru Har Gobind, will arm them and train them to fight and die for their faith. I shall not die in vain. As for the tortures, they will affect my body and not me. I shall not feel them. I shall be in His lap, all the time.

'My dears, God has arranged all things well and wisely, and for the best benefit of His people. Why should I pray to Him to change His scheme of things ? All will be for the good of my people. It will advance my people on the path laid down for them by Baba Nanak. My death will drive the first nail in the cruel Mughals' coffin.

'More, many more, will follow. So let me go. Get ready to become God's warriors, champions of truth and liberty, friends of men, and all tyrants' foes. Be ready to fight for your faith and principles, under the command of Guru Har Gobind. He has been purposely trained to be a soldier. He will lead you to victories. Cheer up, therefore, and let me go.'

The Sikhs bowed and said no more. The Guru then offered prayers at Har Mandir, the Temple of God. What did he pray for ? He prayed for strength to bear everything without a grumble, groan, or complaint.

He then offered himself for arrest. Jahangir's men arrested him and took him to Lahore. Five Sikhs went with him. He forbade all others to accompany him.

( 5 )

So, Jahangir gave orders that Guru Arjan Dev should be arrested and brought into his presence. But he did not wait for the Guru's production before him. Having instructed his officers at Lahore how to treat the Guru, he left for Delhi. An official named Chandu took upon himself the work of killing the Guru with tortures. This Chandu was a Khatri of Lahore, holding an office in Jahangir's court at Delhi. He had wanted to marry his daughter to Guru Arjan Dev's son, Sri Har Gobind. But he had used insulting words against the Guru. The Sikhs of Delhi had heard these words. They had requested the Guru not to accept Chandu's offer. The Guru had accepted their request. On this account Chandu had become a bitter enemy of the Guru. It was for that reason that he undertook to kill the Guru 'with tortures'.

Chandu took the Guru to his house. There he began to torture him. During the first day and night, the Guru was kept without food and drink. He was not allowed to sleep. We have to remember that all this was taking place in mid-summer at Lahore, which is a very hot place. The Guru remained absorbed in meditation. He kept repeating God's Name all the time.

On the second day, he was seated in a large vessel of water heated from below. The water was made to boil. The Guru sat in the boiling water, calmly meditating on God. Then red-hot sand was poured over his head and body. On the third day, he was seated on a red-hot iron plate which was heated from below. Again, red-hot sand was poured on his head and body. These tortures went on for four days.

Several *Jogis* and religious men, who had met and admired the Guru, went to him to express their sympathy and horror. Hazarat Mian Mir, the renowned Muslim saint of Lahore, also went for that purpose. He was struck with horror on seeing what was being done to the Guru. He cried aloud and shed bitter tears of anguish. Then he said to the Guru, 'You are gifted with immense spiritual powers. You are a top-rank true devotee of Almighty God. True devotees of God are as mighty as He. You possess the power to destroy those who are putting you to these tortures. Why don't you use those powers ? Why do you helplessly bear these unbearable tortures ? Surely, if you were to wish it, God would at once come to your help. If you were to wish it, He would surely come, destroy the wicked people, and end your sufferings.'

'If you do not want to use your powers, if you do not want to call upon God to come and save you, then permit me to do so. I am sure He will come. May I ?'

Guru Arjan Dev replied, 'My dear friend, what you say is right. But I would not resort to miracle-working in order to save myself from sufferings or death. Men of God never use their God-given powers for such purposes. I want to let things happen as He wills them to happen. I don't wish to interfere in the working of His Will. I have been telling my Sikhs, "Remember Him in weal and woe, in pleasure and in pain. Accept as sweet and pleasant even His most bitter and painful Will. Regard all pleasure and pain, all joys and sorrows, as His sweet gifts."

'I am lucky, indeed, that God has granted me an opportunity to prove the truth of my words. In my heart of hearts I had prayed for such an opportunity. It has been given to me. I hail it and avail myself of it with utmost joy and thanks. I should not like now even God to take away this opportunity from me. By bearing all these tortures, I want to let the people see that what I teach can be put into practice, too. That will strengthen them to bear, in the same manner, all that He may cause to happen. Hard times are coming. My people will be called upon to pass through extreme and severe sufferings for their faith. I wish to show how such sufferings have to be accepted and borne. I want to set an example to teachers and devotees of the True Name and Truth. I want to teach them that they should not complain against God and His Will. The true test of faith is the hour of misery.

Without examples to guide them, ordinary persons' minds give way and get shaken in the midst of suffering. My example will inspire and strengthen them.

'Secondly, a truly religious man should have the power to suffer every form of torture for the sake of his faith. He should openly profess it, declare it, and stick to it, come what may. God has given me that power. I must use and show that power, so that even weaker ones may take heart and follow my example.'

'In the third place, the body is subject to pleasure and pain. The spirit is above them. Hence, with His grace, I don't suffer the tortures given to my body. My spirit is absorbed in meditating on God. The body has to perish one day. I would not set aside this law of nature. Let His Will be done. Let the body perish in the way He Wills it to perish. His Will is sweet. I am content and at peace. Don't worry my friend. All is well. Pray for me that I may be able to bear with calmness and joy all that He may be pleased to make me endure.'

Mian Mir bowed to the Guru and took his leave.

The Guru's body was all blisters. It was rendered soft like boiled flesh. It became extremely weak. At last he was made to walk to the river Ravi. His five Sikhs were permitted to be with him on the way, to help and support him. To add to his tortures, his blistered body was thrown into the cold water of the Ravi. It was too weak to stand against the force of the fast-flowing stream. It was washed away to its final rest. The Guru's soul flew to the bosom of the All-loving Father of all.

Emperor Jahangir's orders were thus carried out. Guru Arjan Dev was 'killed with tortures'. All the same, Guru Arjan Dev is not dead. He lives in the hearts of millions of his devoted followers and admirers. He lives in the hundreds of sacred songs which he composed and embodied in the Sacred Granth. He will live as long as the lofty principles and ideals preached and practised by him are valued by mankind. He was one with God on earth ; he is one with God in heaven now. He will live as long as God lives in the hearts of men. His death made him immortal. He will remain a source of ever fresh inspiration to all who feel an urge for a life of the spirit; yes, to all who yearn for such a world-order as was pictured and preached by Guru Arjan Dev, namely, that of 'enmity with none and friendship for all'.

Guru Arjan Dev was martyred in May 1606, that is, seven months after Jahangir's having come to the throne. His words about the Guru quoted above were written by him on June 13, 1606, that is, within a fortnight after the Guru's martyrdom.

At the spot where the Guru's body was thrown into the river was later erected a Gurdwara. It is called Dehra Sahib. Before 'Partition' a big fair, called Jor Mel, was annually held there to celebrate the Guru's martyrdom.

## II

### GURU TEGH BAHADUR

( 1 )

You have been told why and how Guru Arjan Dev was martyred under Emperor Jahangir's orders. We shall tell here why and how Jahangir's grandson, Emperor Aurangzeb, martyred Guru Arjan Dev's grandson, Guru Tegh Bahadur.

After Jahangir, his son, Shah Jahan, became the Emperor. He continued the religious policy of his father, but in a milder form. He wished that his eldest son, Dara Shikoh, should succeed him on the throne of Delhi. Dara Shikoh was a pious, kind-hearted and liberal-minded man. If he had succeeded his father, India's subsequent history would have been far different. In that case, the Sikh history, too, would have taken a different course. Dara Shikoh was an admirer of the Sikh Gurus.

But that was not to be. Shah Jahan fell seriously ill. His sons thought that he was about to die. They began to fight among themselves for the throne. Aurangzeb defeated his brothers. He killed Dara Shikoh. Another of his brothers fled from the country to save his life. The third brother was imprisoned by Aurangzeb at Agra. Shah Jahan also was imprisoned at that place by his son Aurangzeb.

After thus disposing of his father and brothers, Aurangzeb became the Emperor of Delhi. He got



Guru Tegh Bahadur.

rid of all his opponents most mercilessly and thoroughly. By such acts he made it clear to all that he was a clever, cruel, crafty and callous man, with an iron will. It was clear to all that he could not tolerate any opposition, in any form, from any quarter whatsoever.

In matters religious he was harder than even his father and grandfather. He was extremely fanatic and bigoted. He was a Sunni Muslim. He had come to believe that his own religion was the only true religion. All who professed other religions were considered by him to be *Kafirs* or infidels. He considered himself to be God's Deputy on earth. He made up his mind that Islam of his conception should be the only religion in his empire. He wanted that all his subjects should be Sunni Muslims. He aimed at establishing an orthodox Sunni Muslim State.

Among the Muslims, there were many who were pious and liberal-minded. They were Shias and Sufis. They did not hate non-Muslims. They wanted to be friends with them, to live at peace with them. Aurangzeb did not like such pious, liberal-minded Muslims. He got them all murdered in cold blood.

At the same time, he started a ruthless campaign to muslimize the Hindus. Strict orders were given to the governors and officers all over the empire to do their utmost to make the Hindus embrace Islam. Those who agreed to become Muslims, were given many facilities, favours and concessions. Those who did not, were subjected to many forms of hardship and harassment, not only by government officers, but also by their

Muslim neighbours. Very hard, indeed, was the Hindus' lot in those days.

( 2 )

Guru Tegh Bahadur took up his duties as the ninth Guru of the Sikhs in March 1665, that is, about seven years after Aurangzeb had managed to occupy the throne of Delhi. It was, thus, in the reign of this fanatic, bigoted, and callous-hearted monarch that Guru Tegh Bahadur had to carry on his work. What was that work ? It was to prepare the people to face all oppression and persecution with fearless, dauntless courage and steadfast boldness. It was to urge them to hold their faith and honour far more dear and precious than life; to be ever ready to give up life, and refuse to give up their *dharma*. It was to develop in them a sense of their rights as human beings. It was to arouse in them a longing and an urge to claim and assert these rights.

Soon after taking up his duties as the ninth Guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur founded Sri Anandpur. The land needed for the purpose was purchased from the Raja of Kahlur. Then, he decided to undertake an extensive missionary tour of the eastern provinces of India. This tour lasted from 1665 to 1670. His aim, of course, was to preach his faith and ideals. He visited important cities like Agra, Allahabad, Banaras, Gaya, and Patna. Then, leaving his family at Patna, he moved onwards through Monghyr to Dacca. From there he carried out extensive tours of that province. He spent about two years in that work there. Then he went to the north and preached his mission among the Assamese.

In Assam the Guru met Raja Ram Singh Kachhawa of Amber (Jaipur), son of Mirza Raja Jai Singh in the beginning of the year 1668. You have read about the latter in an earlier book. He had been a great admirer of the Sikh Gurus. It was he who had invited Guru Harkrishan to Delhi and treated him as his honoured guest. Like his father, Raja Ram Singh was an admirer of the Sikh Guru. He had gone to Assam to lead a military campaign against the Assamese on behalf of Emperor Aurangzeb. The Guru was eager to prevent bloodshed. He managed to bring the two parties together for negotiations. He was able to bring about understanding and peace between them. This was effected at a place named Dhubri on the right bank of the river Brahmaputra. At that spot a high 'Mound of Peace' was raised by soldiers of the two armies, working together, and using their shields for carrying the needed earth. Near that mound stands a gurdwara called Damdama Sahib.

It was during this period, when the Guru was touring the eastern provinces of India, that there occurred a marked and lamentable change for the worse in Aurangzeb's policy towards the Hindus. He adopted a much stiffer attitude towards them. On April 8, 1669, he issued orders to the governors of all provinces to destroy with a willing hand the schools and temples of the 'infidels'. They were strictly enjoined to put an entire stop to the teaching of idolatrous forms of worship.

Now, most of the 'infidels' in Aurangzeb's empire were Hindus. So it was they that became the chief

targets of this anti-infidel campaign. The Sikhs were not given to any form of idolatrous worship. But to the Muslim rulers all dissent from their religion was intolerable; it was *kufar*. Hence to them even the Sikhs were 'infidels'. The Sikhs, therefore, could not expect, nor did they get, a different treatment. They, too, had their share of attention from the Emperor's governors and their officers.

As we know, in most towns and cities there were representatives of the Guru. They were called *masands*. They preached the Sikh faith. They also received, on the Guru's behalf, the offerings made by the Sikhs of their localities. These offerings they took the Guru once a year. Emperor Aurangzeb ordered that the *masands* be expelled from the towns and cities. He also ordered that the Sikhs' places of worship, gurdwaras, be destroyed. Quite a number of gurdwaras were demolished. Mosques were raised on their sites.

Guru Tegh Bahadur was at this time in Assam. It was there that he heard of the change for the worse in Aurangzeb's policy of religious persecution of the non-Muslims, including the Sikhs. As a result of the Emperor's changed religious policy, the Hindus and Sikhs were passing through terrible times. Guru Tegh Bahadur had come to be generally looked upon as *Hind Ki Chadar* or Champion of the Hindus. He was also head of the Sikh religion, the Guru of the Sikhs. How could he stay away from his people, when they were in great distress ? He felt that his place was among them and with them. So, leaving his family at Patna, he rushed back to the Panjab. This happened in 1670. Reaching among his people, he inspired,

encouraged, and consoled them with his discourses, exhortations, and Divine Songs. He taught them to strike fear in none, and to be afraid of one; to frighten not and fear not.

(3)

The Guru felt that it was not the time for him to keep at his headquarters in Anandpur. 'I must be among my people,' he said to himself. 'I must visit them. I must go about from place to place, telling my people to prepare themselves for what is coming, and coming very soon; to shed fear and weakness ; to face and oppose the tyrants with all their might.'

Accordingly, he undertook an extensive whirlwind tour of the Malwa and the southern part of the country. In this tour he visited countless places and addressed countless people. Sikhs from all over the country flocked to see and hear him. There was, always and everywhere, a large assemblage of his followers and disciples at his congregations. They made considerable offerings to the Guru. As he had returned to the Panjab after over five years, the gatherings at his *diwans* (congregations) were unusually large. The offering of *bhet* made by them to the Guru was also unusually large. As he moved from place to place, he was always accompanied by a large number of Sikhs and other visitors.

In all places he said to the people, 'You know what the Mughals are doing. The Great Mughal, Aurangzeb, wants that Islam of his conception should be the only religion professed and practised in his empire ; that all his subjects should be Sunni Muslims. So he wants all non-Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs, to choose

between Islam and death. You may have soon to make that choice. Get ready to suffer for your faith. Take a vow that you will give up your life, but will not give up your *dharma*. Prepare yourselves to face and fight the tyrants in defence of your *dharma*. God will help you. The Emperor will, I feel, turn his attention to me. He will deal with me as his grandfather, Jahangir, dealt with my grandfather, Guru Arjan Dev. His treatment of me might even be crueler and fiercer. He will issue orders for my arrest. He will tell me to choose between Islam and death. You need not be told what choice I shall make. He will then get me murdered. That is certain to happen. But don't feel dejected or downcast. I feel that the path of peaceful activity and suffering will have to be given up. It will have to be abandoned. You know that after Guru Arjan Dev's martyrdom, my father, Guru Har Gobind, had to change the Sikhs from saints to saint-soldiers, from peaceful devotees of God to God-fearing warriors. Similarly, after my death, my son, your next Guru, will take up arms. He will be a great warrior. He will raise a powerful army of saint-warriors. He will change jackals into lions, sparrows into hawks. Get ready for that change. Get ready to muster strong under his leadership and to shake the Mughal empire to its roots. I shall watch and bless you from above.'

As said above, in April 1969 Aurangzeb had issued special and strict orders to the governors of all provinces to destroy the schools and temples of the 'infidels', to stop the teaching and practice of their religion. The orders were carried out with fanatic vigour and zeal.

Guru Tegh Bahadur had returned from his tour of the east and north-east in 1670. Because of the Emperor's above-said orders, the royal reporters and news-writers began to pay closer attention to the activities of the Guru on his return to the Panjab. The royal reporters reported to the Emperor that Guru Tegh Bahadur had become a man of great influence. 'For years by now,' they reported, 'he has been conducting an extensive whirlwind tour of the country. He has been going about with many thousand men. He is also collecting funds. With the increase in the number of his followers and financial resources, he might raise the standard of rebellion.'

Now, at that time, Aurangzeb was encamped at Hasan Abdal. He had gone there to quell the rebellion of the Pathans on the north-western frontier of his empire. He had left Delhi on April 7 and reached Hasan Abdal on June 1674. It was there that he received the royal reporters' reports against the Guru. He was then busy in quelling the Pathans' rebellion. He had no time to make intensive enquiries about allegations. He indeed, did not have even the inclination to make any such enquiries. He was already suspicious of the Sikh movement, to which his grandfather had tried to put an end. He himself also wanted to suppress it. But he was then busy at Hasan Abdal. Though his fears were aroused by the reports, yet he took no immediate action. Then he received another report against the Guru. Thereupon, he decided to strike, to end the Guru's life and activities. What was that report ? We shall see that presently.

(4)

The governors of all provinces were busy taking

action in obedience to the Emperor's orders of April 1669. The governor of Kashmir was doing the same. In 1671, Nawab Saif Khan, governor of Kashmir, was transferred and his place was taken by Nawab Iftikhar Khan. The new governor was an enthusiastic exponent and executor of the Emperor's policy. He chose to be specially active in this matter. He called upon the Hindus of Kashmir to choose between Islam and death. Those who refused to give up their faith were put to the sword. The number of such nameless martyrs was several thousand. Then he turned his attention to the Brahmans of his province. He was very severe with them. He subjected them to utmost tyranny. He told them of the Emperor's orders. He told them to choose between Islam and death. They were further told to make their choice without delay. They said, 'Give us six months' time to consider the matters.' He acceded to their request.

The people and Pandits of Kashmir offered special prayers to their gods and goddesses. But all was in vain. In their extreme distress, the Pandits decided to seek Guru Tegh Bahadur's advice and help. The Guru had completed his tour and had returned to Sri Anandpur. Accordingly, a sixteen-man deputation of the Brahmans of Kashmir waited upon the Guru at Sri Anandpur. Their leader was Pandit Kirpa Ram Datt of Muttan. He had known the Guru for some time as a tutor of his young son, Sri Govind Rai, at Anandpur, after his return to the Panjab. The deputation arrived at Anandpur on May 25, 1675. The Pandits told the Guru of what they had suffered and what more was in store for them. They added, 'Our lot has become unbearable. You are rightly known as *Hind Ki Chader*,

Champion of the Hindus. We have been given six months' time in which to make our choice between Islam and death. That period is about to end. We have not been able to decide this way or that. We have come to you for help, guidance, and protection, O Champion of the Hindus.'

The Pandits' woeful tale plunged the Guru in deep and anxious thought. He thought to himself, 'Millions over millions have to make the same choice. Things are becoming intolerable. Something should be done to set them right. But what should it be ?'

Guru Tegh Bahadur sat mute and lost in thought. At that time his son, Sri Gobind Rai, came in and sat on his lap. He did not receive the usual caresses from his father. He looked in the latter's face. He discovered that his father was absorbed in some deep and anxious thought. Then he looked at the Pandits standing before the Guru. He noticed their long faces and downcast eyes. He felt convinced that the Guru's concern was about these persons.

'What is it, dear Papa ?' asked he in his charming Bihari accent. 'Why is your ever calm and bright face furrowed with care and clouded with gloom ? What are you pondering over so deeply and anxiously ? What have these good people been telling you ? They seem to be plunged in some woe. What is the matter ?'

The Guru replied, 'These good people are Pandits of Kashmir. Their governor has told them to choose between Islam and death. They don't want to choose either of the two. They were given six months' time in which to make up their minds. That time-limit is about to expire. They have come to me for help and advice.

'The problem before me is very tough. The times are hard, very hard. But still harder times are soon to come. The Mughal rulers are making all-out efforts to convert all their subjects to Islam. To achieve that object, they are behaving like fierce wild beasts. Their conscience is dead. Their hearts have become frozen and stony. Something has to be done to melt and soften their hearts, to bring back to them their lost human nature, and to revive their conscience. On the other hand, the Hindus have lost all sense of dignity and self-respect. They seem to have become dead. They bear everything most meekly, without even a whispered protest. They are spiritually dead. Something has to be done to re-inspire them with life, courage and human dignity, to put new life into their dead bones.

'This two-fold task must be performed without delay. The first task is that of melting the rulers' stony, frozen hearts, and filling them with fear of God, love for man, and human sympathy. The second task is that of infusing life, courage, and sense of self-respect in the Hindus, and arousing in them the courage to do and dare. They have to be taught to claim and assert their human rights.

'There seems to be only one way to achieve all this. Some great holy man should throw himself before the beastly tyrants and challenge them to do their worst. The sight of the sufferings bravely borne by such a one, might give them a shock and a shaking. Their dead human nature might come back to life. Their hearts might begin to throb with human sym-

pathy. On the other hand, the same sight will produce a strong stir and indignation among the non-Muslims. They will realize the need of ending the tyranny of the bigoted rulers. They will begin to think how to make themselves free from the beastly tyrants' yoke. But how and where to find such a holy man ? That is the problem which has made me sad and lost in thought, my dear.'

Sri Govind Rai, who was hardly eight years old, said, 'For that sacrifice, dear father, who can be worthier than you ?' On hearing this, Guru Tegh Bahadur felt satisfied that his son would be a worthy successor to him. He felt sure that Sri Gobind Rai would prove equal to the task before him. The task was that of leading his people through the difficult times that were soon to come. Accordingly, he told the Pandits to go and tell the governor, 'Guru Tegh Bahadur is our leader and guide. First make him a Muslim. Then we shall follow his example. We shall adopt your faith of our own accord.'

### (5)

The Kashmiri Pandits thanked the Guru for his sympathy, guidance, and promise to sacrifice himself in order to save them. They went to the governor. They said to him what the guru had advised them to do. The governor promptly reported the whole matter to the Emperor at Hasan Abdal, and sought his further orders. Emperor Aurangzeb was filled with rage on getting the governor's report. His own reporters also sent a similar report. They told him of the Guru's sympathetic response to the Brahmans' appeal; of his readiness to lay down his life in their cause. The Emperor burst out, 'He has dared to express sympathy

with the infidel Brahmans of Kashmir. His conduct is an open affront to me and my policy regarding the infidels. I cannot brook it. He must suffer for it ; die for it.'

He at once issued an order to the governor of Lahore to have the Guru arrested, fettered, and detained in prison. Further orders about him, he added, would be given on receiving a report that the first order had been carried out. The governor of Lahore passed on the Emperor's order to the *Faujdar* of Sarhind, Dilawar Khan; for Sri Anandpur was within his jurisdiction. The latter, in turn, asked the circle *Kotwal* of Ropar, Noor Mohammad Khan Mirza, to arrest the Guru; for Sri Anandpur lay in his immediate jurisdiction.

The Emperor's orders for the Guru's arrest was kept secret. The *Kotwal* feared that, if the order got wind, the Guru's followers and admirers might create trouble. He wanted to wait for a suitable opportunity to effect the arrest without any fuss and difficulty. He did not have to wait long for that opportunity. The Guru, accompanied by a few followers, left Anandpur for another tour. He did so on July 11, 1975. He soon arrived at the village of Malikpur Rangharan near Ropar. He wanted to cross the river Satluj for his onward journey. At that village he stayed in the house of a Sikh named Dargahia or Nigahia.

• The *Kotwal* had deputed special police informers to watch and report the Guru's movements. They informed him of the Guru's arrival at Malikpur Rangharan along with a few Sikhs. He hurried to the spot at once. The Jats of the village got news that the *Kotwal* had come to arrest the Guru. They came out in a body to oppose the arrest. But with the help of

the local Ranghars and a strong force of additional police, the *Kotwal* was able to arrest the Guru and his companions. This happened on July 12, 1675.

The *Kotwal*, Noor Mohammad Khan Mirza, sent the Guru to Sarhind. The *Faujdar* of Sarhind, Dilawar Khan, reported the Guru's arrest to the Imperial headquarters and sought further orders. The Guru was kept at Sarhind for some three months and a half, fettered, chained, and detained in prison. Then a *parwana* was received from the Imperial headquarters. As required therein, the Guru was despatched to Delhi, shut up in an iron cage. He reached there on November 5, 1675. The Emperor was informed accordingly, and his further orders were sought about what was to be done to the Guru. He was kept in an iron cage, fettered and chained. Nobody was allowed to meet him.

In the meanwhile, the *Subedar* and the royal Qazi did their utmost to persuade the Guru to be converted to Islam. Finding him unwilling to do so, they tortured him most cruelly for five days with a view to coercing him to agree to their proposal. But he was adamant as a rock. Nothing could shake him and make him agree 'to abjure his faith or perjure his soul to preserve his muddy vesture of decay'. He remained firm and perfectly calm. He was willing to lay down his life rather than to give up his faith. His tortures were made severer and crueler still. But they failed to shake him. On November 11, 1675, they killed his companions before his very eyes. Bhai Mati Das was bound between two pillars and cut down with a saw. Bhai Dayal Das was boiled to death in a cauldron fo

boiling water. Bhai Sati Das was roasted alive with oil-soaked cotton wrapped round his body. Thus did the Guru's companions sacrifice their lives for their faith, with God's Name on their lips, and their eyes fixed on the Guru's face.

By then the Emperor's order had been received about what was to be done to the Guru. It said, 'Tell him that if he claims to be a true prophet sent by God to preach a religion, he should show some miracles in support of his claim. If he does not or cannot show any miracle, he should be told to accept Islam. If he refuses to do that, he should be executed.'

The Emperor's men informed the Guru of the choices offered to him by the Emperor. The Guru replied, 'True men of God never perform miracles in order to save themselves from sufferings or hardships. They do not perform miracles to prove their greatness, either. I will not show any miracles. I will not accept Islam. Do with me as you like. I would prefer to lay down my life in sympathy with the oppressed and helpless Brahmans of Kashmir.'

After the Guru thus announced his decision about the choices offered by the Emperor, he was led out of his cage to an open space near the Chandni Chowk. He was allowed to bathe at a well nearby. After taking his bath, the Guru went and sat under a banyan tree. The executioner stood near him with his drawn sword. The Guru said to him, 'When I conclude my prayers, I shall bow to God. Do your work at that moment.' The Guru began to recite *Japji*. Then he offered prayers to God and bowed to Him. The executioner cut off the Guru's head with his sword. This occurred on the 11th of November, 1675.

A.D. A large crowd had appeared there to witness the execution. At the place where Guru Tegh Bahadur was beheaded, stands the magnificent gurdwara named Sis Ganj.

The Guru's body was publicly exposed in the streets of Delhi, to serve as a warning to the 'infidels'. It was announced that nobody was permitted to remove the Guru's dead body. Strong guards were posted to prevent its being taken away.

( 6 )

However, a daring Ranghreta Sikh, named Bhai Jaita, belonging to the sweeper class, managed to take possession of the Guru's head. Concealing it in a bag he hurried with it to Anandpur. There he presented it to the Guru's son. Guru Gobind Singh, who was yet a mere child, was deeply affected at the extreme devotion of the Ranghreta. He flung his arms round Bhai Jaita's neck and declared, '*Ranghrete Guru Ke Bete*' (Ranghretas are the Guru's own sons). The head was then cremated with due rites. At the place of its cremation stands a gurdwara named Sis Ganj, Anandpur.

A severe, blinding dust-storm began to blow on the following day. A daring, devoted Lubana Sikh, named Lakhi Shah, decided to take advantage of the storm. Along with some of his tribesmen, he loaded cotton on some carts and drove them towards the place where the Guru's body lay. He managed to take up the body and load it on a cart. Thus loaded and concealed, the Guru's body was taken to the Lubanas' huts outside the city. Lakhi Shah placed it in his own hut. He made a heap of firewood in his hut. He placed the Guru's body on that heap. He covered it with more firewood. He then set fire to his hut. He made it

known that his hut had caught fire by accident. His hut and a few others were reduced to ashes. Thus it was that the Guru's body, rather its trunk, was cremated by Lakhi Shah and his companions. They all then said prayers and thanked the Lord for His having helped them in performing their sacred duty.

A grand gurdwara, named Rakab Ganj, stands at the place where Guru Tegh Bahadur's headless body or trunk was cremated.

Aurangzeb's orders were thus carried out. Guru Tegh Bahadur, 'Champion of the Hindus' was executed. Thus did the Guru "gain martyrdom which stands unparalleled in the history of the world. It is true that there have been, in the past and since then, innumerable martyrs who had, or have, died for their faiths or in defence of their countries. But Guru Tegh Bahadur died for the freedom of conscience and conviction of people belonging to a faith other than his own. He did not believe in Brahmanism. In fact, the Guru's Sikh faith had discarded the Brahmanical ways of life. Yet, he stood for their freedom of belief as God-created human beings, in opposition to the narrow sectarianism of the power-mad Mughal autocrat, who wished to coerce his subjects to his own way of thinking. This to Guru Tegh Bahadur was against the spirit of humanism and human equality for which he stood and sacrificed his life." (Dr Ganda Singh)

Yes, Guru Tegh Bahadur was executed. But did he die ? Is he dead ? No, he is not dead. He can never die. What was mortal of him, his body of flesh and bones, of course, disappeared from the mortals' eyes of flesh. But he lives, and shall ever live, in the hearts

of all who value the noble, lofty, principles which he preached and practised, and for which he died. He lives, and shall ever live, with us in the hundreds of soul-inspiring Sacred Songs which he composed and sang. He lives, and shall ever live, in the hearts of millions and millions of his devout followers and admirers.

According to a prominent Hindu historian, Guru Tegh Bahadur's 'execution was universally regarded by Hindus as a sacrifice for their faith'. They felt grateful to the Guru for what he did for them. As long, therefore, as this feeling of gratitude lives in their hearts, so long will Guru Tegh Bahadur, Champion of the Hindus, be alive for them.

Looking from another angle, we find that the martyred Guru lives amongst us also in the visible world. Do you know what effect his martydom exercised on the people? In the words of the same Hindu historian, the effect was that 'the whole of the Panjab began to burn with indignation and revenge'.

One immediate result of this effect was significant and wholesome. We know that Aurangzeb was burning with zeal to convert all Hindus to Islam. The above-said fire of indignation and revenge cooled the fire of his fanatic zeal. The Hindus were allowed to live on in his empire. But for that change, they would have been all made to become Muslims. The Hindus in India are a living monument of what the Guru did for their faith. They live because he died for their sake.

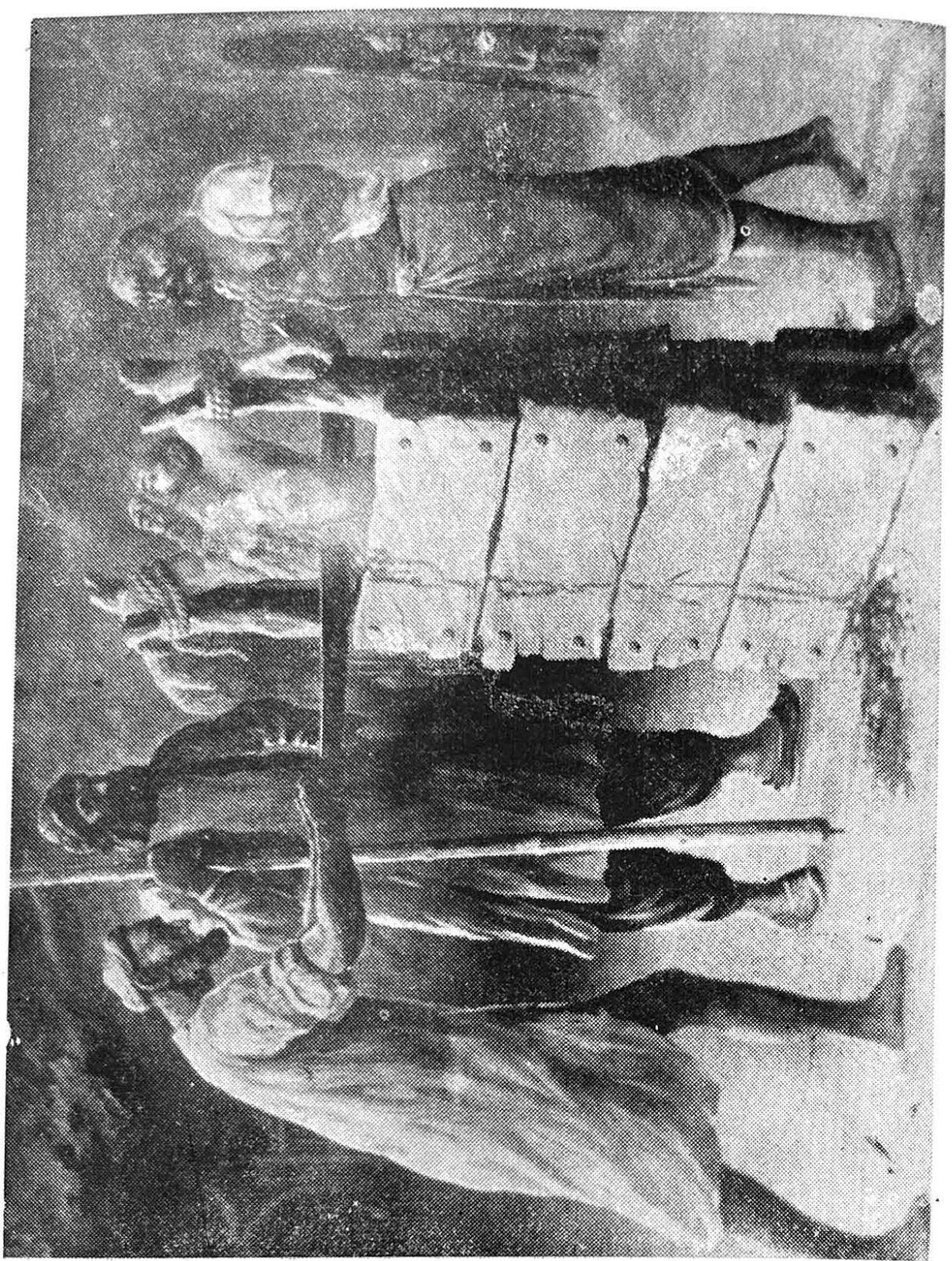
One thing more. The spirit of Guru Tegh Bahadur passed on into the body of his son, Guru Gobind Singh. The latter was gifted with unique practical

wisdom and foresight. He made a note of the said fire of 'indignation and revenge'. He took effective steps to harness these sentiments. He decided to direct them into effective channels. He created a whole community of saint-warriors. The fire of 'indignation and revenge' was alive in them. The spirit which he got from his martyred father he passed on to his *Khalsa*. The *Khalsa* destroyed the tyrants who had been forcing their religion on others. Their empire was gone. That was another consequence of Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom. It altered the whole course of the subsequent history of the land. As another prominent Hindu historian writes :

'Few religious executions had such far-reaching consequences as that of the Sikh Guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur, which exercised a decisive influence on the subsequent history of the Panjab'.

Thus, we see that even after his execution, Guru Tegh Bahadur's spirit and personality have continued to live and work among us. He has made unique and wonderful achievements. Who can say that he is dead ? He lives still and shall ever live. His murderers are no more.

Bhai Mati Das.



### III

## BHAIS MATI DAS, DIAL DAS AND SATI DAS

### 1. Bhai Mati Das

Bhai Mati Das came from a Brahman family of village Kariala in the district of Jehlam (Pakistan). He was the eldest son of Bhai Praga. His grandfather, Mahatma Gautam Das, used to be a deeply religious man of a noble, saintly character. He was loved and respected by all, Hindus and Muslims alike.

Bhai Praga was a strong stalwart. He had the body and the strength of a giant. He embraced the Sikh faith during Guru Har Gobind's time. He lived the life of a true Sikh. His life was a model for others. He was a prominent saint-soldier of Guru Har Gobind's. He took a hero's part in Guru Har Gobind's battles. He had four sons :—Bhais Mati Das, Sati Das, Jati Das, and Sakhi Das.

Bhai Mati Das was as strongly built as his father, Bhai Praga. He was a dear, devout disciple of Guru Tegh Bahadur. He actually practised what he believed and professed. Guru Tegh Bahadur made him his *diwan*. He had to look after the income and expenditure of the Guru's *darbar*.

Along with the Guru, Bhai Mati Das was also arrested, chained, and imprisoned. Under Emperor Aurangzeb's orders, Guru Tegh Bahadur was to be

beheaded. The qazis decided to torture and kill the Guru's companions before his eyes. They thought, 'The sight of their suffering and fate might shake his resolve. He might get inclined to save himself by agreeing to our proposal. He might embrace Islam.'

So, they picked out Bhai Mati Das first of all. He was led out in chains to Chandni Chowk under a heavy guard. He was calm. His face beamed with glory. His gait was a mighty hero's swagger. He walked like a superior among inferiors. His whole bearing showed wonderful self-confidence and self-satisfaction.

A large crowd had gathered already in Chandni Chowk. Bhai Mati Das was brought there under a heavy guard. A number of qazis accompanied him. They were apparently saying something to him. But he neither listened nor heard. His mind was wholly fixed on God. He was eager to meet Him. All eyes were fixed on him. No eyes were dry. All observers were filled with reverence and admiration for that tall, strong, calm, and holy man of God. They shuddered at the thought of what was about to happen to him.

The spot fixed for his execution was reached. The guard and the qazis halted, with Bhai Mati Das in their midst. The Chief Qazi then said to Bhai Mati Das, 'O brave young man, be wise. This is my last appeal to your common-sense. Why throw away your youthful life and all the joys it may bring? Accept Islam, and be one of the ruling class. You will get wealth and high position. You will enjoy a life of peace, plenty and pleasure. When you die, Prophet

Muhammad will receive you among the faithful. You will be led into Paradise. You will live there forever among pleasures of all kinds. If you refuse to accept all these good things of this world and the next, you will be killed with tortures. So, be wise. Make a wise choice.'

Bhai Mati Das replied, 'Why waste your time and breath ? I prefer dying to giving up my faith. Be quick.'

The qazis said, 'All right, let it be as you desire. But have you any last wish which you would like to be fulfilled before you are killed ?'

Bhai Mati Das said, 'Yes. Stand me with my face towards my Guru. In that way I shall behold him to the last moment of my life here.'

His wish was granted. He was made to stand with his face towards the Guru. He was tightly tied between two erect flat logs of wood. A saw was placed on his head. Its each end was held by a fierce looking Pathan. The saw began to move, to and fro. Blood began to flow down Bhai Mati Das's face and neck. He did not utter any cry of pain. His face showed no sign of suffering. He was calmly repeating the *Japji*. His body was sawn into two. His devout, brave soul reached the bosom of the kind and loving Father of all.

Bhai Mati Das has not died. He still lives in the heart of those who worship goodness, who admire nobility. He lives in the minds of those who lead spiritual life. He is the inspiration of those who prefer

soul to body; who, in order to save their soul, to keep it pure and unsullied, would gladly sacrifice the body and all its pleasures. He is the motivation of those who place duty before self. He is the hero of all who work for objectives and not for rewards or recognition.

( 2 )

### Bhai Dial Das

Bhai Dial Das was another of the Sikhs who had been arrested along with Guru Tegh Bahadur, and taken to Delhi. He was a son of Bhai Mati Das, a resident of village Alipur, near Multan, Pakistan. His grandfather, Bhai Balu, had fought like a hero in the first Sikh battle against the Mughals in 1628 A. D. He had ten brothers, all of whom were devoted Sikhs and gallant warriors. They all achieved martyrdom in serving the Guru.

Like his companions, Bhai Dial Das, was also arrested, chained, and imprisoned in the Kotwali at Delhi. After having martyred Bhai Mati Das, the qazis turned to Bhai Dial Das. They led him to the spot where Bhai Mati Das had been sawn into two. He was told to see what had happened to his companion. He was advised to be wiser. He was told of the joys and pleasures he could enjoy by accepting Islam. He was told of what would happen to him if he refused to become a Muslim.

Bhai Dial Das heard all this. He did not feel nervous or afraid. He remained firm in his resolve. Then he said, 'My misguided friends, do you think that you have killed my brother, Bhai Mati Das ? No, you are

mistaken. You have not killed him. You have given him ever-lasting life. He has become immortal. He will live for ever in the hearts of men. He will be a source of inspiration to others. Many like him will rise and follow his example. A time will come when you and your Emperor will be no more, but Bhai Mati Das will be yet alive. I will not give up my faith. The pleasures which you offer have no charm for me. The tortures which you threaten to give me have no terrors for me. Be quick. Send me to where my brother, Bhai Mati Das, has gone to live for ever in the lap of the Lord.'

'All right,' said the Chief Qazi, 'be ready.' He was seated in a large boiling vessel. It was filled with water. Then they lit fire under it. They went on heating it from below. The water began to boil. Bhai Dial was calm and cool all this while. He sat in the boiling water with no sign of suffering on his face. He did not give out even the faintest cry of pain. He went on repeating the Guru's hymns. This went on until his soul left his body to join Bhai Mati Das.

( 3 )

### Bhai Sati Das

Bhai Sati Das was a brother of Bhai Mati Das, who had been the first to be martyred on that day. After putting Bhai Dial Das to death, Aurangzeb's men took out Bhai Sati Das from the prison. He was told to see what had happened to his two companions. 'If you don't want to suffer what they have suffered,' they said, 'give up your *kufar* or false faith, and embrace Islam, the only faith acceptable to God. Be wise, make a wise choice. If you embrace Islam, you will be given a high position and plenty of pleasures. Make up your mind.'

Bhai Sati Das was firm as a rock in his resolve. He told the qazi and his men that he was eager to join his martyred companions. Under the qazi's orders, Bhai Sati Das was wrapped in cotton, which was then soaked in oil. Thus wrapped, he was burnt to death. All the time he was calm and cheerful, and continued reciting the Guru's hymns. This happened on 11th November, 1675. Such heroic souls never die. They live for all times, as sublime as ever. Throughout the ages they stand like light-houses in the waves, guiding humanity through storms. They are the inspiration of the soul for the rising generation.

It behoves us to ever remember such heroes; to preserve and pursue, in our life and practice, the noble principles for which they laid down their lives. We should be firm and sincere in our faith. We should prefer a life of spiritual joys to a life of flesh and fleshy pleasures.

IV

**THE BELOVED FIVE**

(Panj Piare)

( 1 )

On the Baisaki day of the year 1699 A. D., or on March 30 of that year, Guru Gobind Singh held a big gathering at Anandpur. It was held at the place where now stands the gurdwara named Kesgarh. After the morning service, he stood up, drew his sword, and said aloud, 'Is there anyone here ready to lay down his life at my call ? This sword of mine is crying for the blood of a dear Sikh of mine.'

At this amazing call, the whole assembly was filled with terror and amazement. The Guru went on repeating his demand for the head of a dear Sikh. At the third call, Bhai Daya Ram got up and offered his head. The Guru pulled him into a tent nearby. The sound of a blow, as that of a sword cutting off a man's head, was heard from inside the tent. A stream of blood came out of the tent. The Guru came out. He waved his sword dripping with blood. He called for another Sikh's head. At this Bhai Dharm Das stood up and offered his head to the Guru. He was taken into the tent. Again the sounds of a sword-blow and a body falling on the ground were heard from inside the tent. A fresh stream of blood was seen to come out. In the same way, three other Sikhs stood up, one after another, and offered their heads to the Guru.

They were—Bhai Mukham Chand, Bhai Himmat Rai, and Bhai Sahib Chand.

Then, dressing the five in handsome new clothes, the Guru brought them before the assembly. He then baptized them with his *amrit*—sweetened water stirred with a two-edged sword called *Khanda*. He called them his Beloved Five. He made their names end in ‘Singh’. They became : Bhai Daya Singh, Bhai Dharm Singh, Bhai Mukham Singh, Bhai Himmat Singh, and Bhai Sahib Singh.

Then the Guru desired his Beloved Five to prepare *amrit* or nectar in the same way as he had done. They obeyed. When it was ready, he stood up before them with folded hands and said. ‘Now, my Dear Ones, baptize me as I have baptized you. Make me a Singh as I have made you Singhs. Don’t feel puzzled. Don’t hesitate. My Dear Ones, you are my Guru. I am your *Chela* (disciple). O my Guru, grant my request.’

They obeyed. They baptized him as he had baptized them. He thanked them and said, ‘Now my name is not Gobind Rai, but Gobind Singh.’

Having offered their heads to the Guru in response to his amazing call, they became martyrs. From that day they were living martyrs. They became his, body and soul. They remained with him to the end of their earthly lives.

Their names have become immortal. They will be remembered as long as the Sikh community lasts. They are remembered daily, morning and evening, in

every place where a Sikh lives. Every time a Sikh recites the Sikh prayer, he repeats their names. Every time *Karah Parshad* is distributed in a Sikh congregation, their share is taken out before distribution among the persons present there.

Not much is known about the early lives of the Beloved Five. What is known about them is given in brief below.

( 2 )

### ( i ) Bhai Daya Singh

Bhai Daya Singh was a son of Sri Sudha, a Khatri of Lahore. His mother's name was Srimati Diali. He was born in 1669 A.D. So, he was aged about thirty on the day when he qualified to be the first of the Beloved Five. After taking *amrit*, he became Bhai Daya Singh. He was appointed the leader of the Beloved Five. As we shall see, he was the youngest of the Five Beloved Ones.

He accompanied the Guru to the end of his life. He took a heroic part in the Guru's wars. In December 1704, the Guru was prevailed upon by the Beloved Five to leave Chamkaur Sahib. Bhai Daya Singh was assigned the duty of accompanying the Guru. He accepted the duty. It was Bhai Daya Singh that took to Aurangzeb the Guru's letter called the *Zafarnama*. The Emperor was then in the Deccan. The journey was difficult, risky, and long. He delivered the Guru's letter to Aurangzeb. On going through it, the Emperor was visibly moved. He appeared to be nervous and agitated. He became irritated and angry. He

addressed hard and angry words to the Guru's Dear One. But the latter stood calm and unafraid. He then said, 'O Emperor, just think of the cruel, inhuman wrongs that you and your men have done to the Guru. In spite of all that, he has taken the courage to write to you and give you sound advice. He has tried to reveal yourself to you, to make you see what you are in your Prophet's eyes, to make you realize how your actions contradict your professions. He occupies the throne of Baba Nanak, before whom your ancestor, Emperor Babar, bowed and prayed for blessings. He has the power to make and unmake kings; for he is ever in tune with the Almighty Father. You will be well advised to seek his friendship. You, too, should seek his blessings. He can give you what your great conquests and your wide empire have failed to give you. He will give you peace of mind. I feel that it is peace of mind that you now need more than anything else. If you go and see him, he will extend his love and kindness to you. He will forget and forgive all the wrongs done to him. He is as forgiving and kind as God; for God dwells in him and he ever lives in God.'

Bhai Daya Singh's conduct was like bearding the lion in his own den. You know he was one of Guru Gobind Singh's lions. His words softened the Emperor. He said, 'The Guru's letter and your words have opened my eyes. I now realize that I have done him much wrong. I now realize that he is a dear one of Almighty Allah. I am nearing the end of my life's journey. I shall soon have to render an account of my doings. I shudder to think what the verdict of the Great, All-knowing, All-loving Judge will be. The Guru

can help me. He has invited me to see him. I long to see him. But I am sick, perhaps on my death-bed. I cannot go to him. Go back to him and request him to see me. He has promised to do so in this letter.'

The Emperor then ordered his men to treat Bhai Daya Singh with kindness and honour. He himself conferred a robe of honour on the Guru's bold and fearless messenger. For his return journey, he gave him a *parwana* (chit) of safe conduct. It was an order to his officials on the way back to see that the holder was well treated, and that no harm of any kind was done to him. Because of that royal chit, Bhai Daya Singh could travel safely and more quickly. On reaching the Guru's presence, he delivered to him the Emperor's message. To that he added his own recommendation. The Guru agreed to see the ailing monarch.

Bhai Daya Singh accompanied the Guru to Nander in the Deccan. He continued to serve him with utmost affection and devotion. He died there in 1708 A.D.

### **(ii) Bhai Dharam Singh**

Bhai Dharam Das was the second of the five Sikhs who offered their heads to Guru Gobind Singh on the Baisakhi day of 1699 A.D. He was born at Hastinapur or Delhi in the year 1666 A.D. So, he was aged about thirty-three on that day. His father's name was Sri Sant Ram. He was a Jat by caste. His mother's name was Srimati Sabho. On taking *amrit*, he became Bhai Dharam Singh. He accompanied the Guru to the end of his life. He took a hero's part in Guru Gobind Singh's wars. When the Guru was prevailed upon to leave

Chamkaur Sahib in December 1704, the Beloved Five there assigned Bhai Dharam Singh the duty of going with the Guru. He accompanied the Guru to Nander, Deccan. He served him with utmost affection and devotion. He died there in 1708 A.D. Some people, however, say that he died fighting at Chamkaur Sahib.

### (iii) Bhai Mukham Singh

Bhai Muham Chand was third the Sikh who offered his head to Guru Gobind Singh on the Baisakhi day of 1699 A.D. He was born in the year 1663 A.D. Hence he was about thirty-six years old on that historic day. His father's name was Sri Tirath Ram, a washerman of Dwarka. His mother's name was Srimati Devan Bai. On taking *amrit*, he became Bhai Mukham Singh. Thereafter he remained with the Guru. He took a heroic part in Guru Gobind Singh's wars. He died fighting at Chamkaur Sahib on December 22, 1704.

### (iv) Bhai Sahib Singh

Bhai Sahib Chand was the fourth to qualify himself for being one of Guru Gobind Singh's Beloved Five. He was born to Sri Chamna, a barber of Bidar, in the year 1662 A.D. He was thus about thirty-seven years old on that historic day. His mother's name was Srimati Sona Bai. On taking *amrit* he became Bhai Sahib Singh. He remained with the Guru to the last. He served the Guru with utmost affection and devotion. He fought heroically in the Guru's wars. He died fighting at Chamkaur Sahib on December 22, 1704.

### (v) Bhai Himmat Singh

Bhai Himmat Rai was the fifth Sikh to offer his head to Guru Gobind Singh on the Baisakhi day of

1699 A.D. His Father, Sri Gulab Rai, was a water-carrier of Jagannath. His mother's name was Srimati Dhanno. He was born in the year 1661 A.D. in Jagannath. He was, thus, about thirty-eight years old on the day of his becoming one of the Beloved Five. On taking *amrit*. he became Bhai Himmat Singh. He remained with the Guru to the end of his life. All along he served the Guru most faithfully and lovingly. He took a heroic part in the Guru's wars. He died fighting at Chamkaur Sahib on December 22, 1704.

## V

### **BABA AJIT SINGH, BABA JUJHAR SINGH**

( 1 )

In ordinary speech the word '*baba*' means 'grand-father' or 'an old man'. Hence, on reading the heading of this story, you might be led to think that it relates to some old men. But that is not the case. When the events narrated below took place, Baba Ajit Singh and Baba Jujhar Singh were in their teens. Then, you might ask, why are they called *Babas*? The explanation is this. Among the Sikhs the word *Baba* is also applied to one worthy of high respect. It means 'Most Respectable'. The sons of the Sikh Gurus were called '*Babas*' from the very beginning of their lives. That is why the word '*Baba*' is applied to Guru Gobind Singh's sons. You have already read about Baba Atal.

( 2 )

Baba Ajit Singh was the eldest of the four sons of Guru Gobind Singh. He was born at Anandpur on January 7, 1687 A.D. From his early life he was given the sort of education and training that befitted the saint-soldiers of Guru Gobind Singh. He acquired wonderful proficiency in the use of weapons of war, especially the bow and the arrow. He was also an excellent swordsman.

He was a strong and brave warrior. He began to take part in the Guru's wars very early in life. He

performed astonishing feats of bravery on several occasions. No danger or difficulty could ever daunt him. No danger could deter him from his path of duty.

Once a Brahman came to Guru Gobind Singh's *darbar*. He complained that his newly-wedded wife had been taken away by force by some Pathans of Bassi, near Hoshiarpur. Baba Ajit Singh offered to help the Brahman to recover his wife. With a band of young brave Sikhs, Baba Ajit Singh fell upon Bassi during the night. He arrested the Pathans responsible for the wicked deed. He recovered the Brahman's wife. He took the wicked Pathans to Anandpur the following morning. The Brahman's wife was restored to him. The wicked Pathans were punished, suitably and severely.

Years later, Anandpur was besieged by the Mughal armies from Sarhind and Lahore. They were commanded by Nawab Wazir Khan and Nawab Zabardast Khan, respectively. All the hill chiefs, who were Hindus, joined them with their armies. One day, during the siege, the two commanders of the imperial army sent a messenger to the Guru. He was told to give the following message to him : - 'This army is not one belonging to petty hill chiefs. It is that of the great and mighty Emperor Aurangzeb. You will not be able to oppose it for long. You should show respect to the Emperor, give up fighting, and embrace Islam.'

Baba Ajit Singh was standing near the Guru. The messenger's words aroused his anger. He drew his sword and said, 'Shut up. If you utter another word, I shall humble your pride. I will cut off your head from your body. I will cut you to pieces for daring to speak such insolent words before the Guru.'

The messenger said nothing more. He went away, humbled and burning with rage.

The siege of Anandpur caused great hardships to the Guru and his Sikhs. The besiegers were also getting tired. They sent message after message to the Guru. They said, 'Vacate the fort. Go where you like. We swear on the Quran and the cow that you will not be harmed.' The Guru was sure that the oaths were false. He was not in favour of placing any trust in them. But he was prevailed upon, chiefly by his mother, to vacate the fort. He did so during the night of December 20, 1704. As soon as the besiegers came to know of this, they forgot their oaths and fell upon the Guru's party. Baba Ajit Singh, with a party of Sikhs, held up the enemy, while the rest were crossing the river Sarsa. When all had crossed, he and his party plunged their horses into the flooded river. They soon reached the other bank. The enemy did not have the courage to jump into the fast-flowing ice-cold water of the flooded stream.

After crossing the Sarsa, the Guru hurried towards Chamkaur. He had only forty Sikhs with him, besides his two elder sons. The Mughal army was coming after him. He learnt that another Mughal army lay a few miles off in front. He was thus between two large armies. He decided to meet them at Chamkaur. He reached there about sunset. He occupied a mud-house or *haveli*, and began to wait for the enemy.

The Mughal armies arrived during the night. They besieged the mud-house on the following day. They attacked it from all sides. They had to go back, every time, after suffering heavy losses. Then they

decided to force open the gate. They rushed towards it. A batch of five Sikhs went out to meet them and hold their advance as long as possible. The Sikhs fought very bravely. They killed many. At last they were overpowered and slain. Then another batch of five Sikhs went out to meet and check the enemy's advance. This went on for some time. The enemy suffered heavily at the hands of each batch.

After a time, Guru Gobind Singh's eldest son, Baba Ajit Singh, asked permission to go out and oppose the enemy. He said, 'Dear father, my name is Ajit or Unconquerable. I will not be conquered. And if conquered, I will not flee or come back alive. Permit me to go, dear father.' He was less than eighteen years of age. The Guru knew what the end of his son would be.

But were they who had already fallen not his sons ? He hugged and kissed Baba Ajit Singh for the last time. He then bade him go out and seek martyrdom and life everlasting.

Baba Ajit Singh went out. He was accompanied by five Sikhs. At first they poured a rain of arrows on the enemy. He fought like a hero. Soon his stock of arrows was exhausted. He took out his lance and sprang upon the enemy. He was wounded. But he fought on as bravely as ever. Baba Ajit Singh thrust his lance into the heart of a Muhammedan soldier. The soldier wore steel armour. The lance got stuck in the armour. Baba Ajit Singh tried to pull it out. It broke in two. He drew his sword and fell upon the enemy. But he was overpowered. He fell. He was martyred. His soul went to meet his grandfather at the Almighty's *darbar*.

The Guru had been watching his son from the roof of the mud-house. He had admired and rejoiced at the skill, strength, and bravery shown by his son. He had seen him get wounded. He saw him fall. He thanked God that his son had met a saint-warrior's death, that he had achieved martyrdom and eternal life.

(3)

Baba Jujhar Singh was the second son of Guru Gobind Singh. He was born in March 1689. He, too, got the same training as his elder brother. Like Baba Ajit Singh, he accompanied the Guru to Chamkaur. Baba Jujhar Singh had also watched his elder brother fighting with the enemy. He had seen him fall. He, at once, stood before his father with folded hands. He made the same request as his elder brother had done. 'Permit me, dear father,' said he, 'to go where my brother has gone. Don't say that I am too young. I am your son. I am a Singh or Lion of yours. I shall prove worthy of you. I shall die fighting, with my face towards the enemy, with God and the Guru on my lips and in my heart.'

Baba Jujhar Singh was then less than sixteen years of age. The Guru was pleased to hear what he had said. He took him on his lap. He kissed and patted him. He gave him a sword and a shield. On his turban he planted a small crest, such as bridegrooms wear. 'Go my son,' said he, 'and wed life-giving Death. We were here for a while. We shall return to our real home. Go, and wait for me there. Your grandfather and elder brother are already waiting for you.'

The lad of less than sixteen, thus armed, went out with five Sikhs. He fought as bravely and fearlessly as

his elder brother had done. Many a mighty warrior fell before the child-warrior. But the odds were too heavy against him. He was overpowered. He died fighting to the last.

The Guru was watching all this. When he saw his son fall, he thanked God that his son had proved a worthy saint-warrior, and achieved martyrdom and life everlasting.

## VI

### BABA ZORAWAR SINGH, BABA FATEH SINGH

( 1 )

Under Emperor Aurangzeb's orders, the Mughal governors of Lahore and Sarhind, with all their troops, marched against Guru Gobind Singh. They were joined by the Hindu hill-chiefs and the Muhammedan *Ranghars* and *Gujjars* of the locality.

The combined armies besieged Anandpur and cut off all supplies. The Guru and his Sikhs bore the extreme hardships of the long siege with steadfast courage. The besiegers began to despair of success. They sent messengers to the Guru. The messengers said, 'The Mughal governors and the hill-chiefs have sworn on the Quran and the cow that, if you vacate the fort, you will not be harmed in any way. You may go where you like.'

The Guru had no faith in these oaths. So he refused to vacate the fort. But, after a time, he was prevailed upon by his mother and others to leave the fort. When he did so, the besiegers forgot their solemn oaths. They fell upon the Guru near the Sarsa river.

In the confusion which followed the fight near the Sarsa, the Guru's mother, Mata Gujri, got separated from him and his Sikhs. His two younger sons, Baba Zorawar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh, were with her. In the biting winter wind of early dawn, she travelled as

chance directed her. Her path lay through a thick jungle. Some way off, she met a Brahman named Gangu. He had once been a cook at the Guru's house. His village, Kheri, was nearby. He offered to give her shelter and protection in his house. She decided to take her grandsons with her, and accept shelter and protection offered by Gangu Brahman.

He lodged them in the hinder-most room of his house. When the Guru's mother went to sleep, he stole her saddle-bag which contained her valuables and money. He buried it somewhere in the house. When Mata Gujri woke, she found that the saddle-bag was missing. She questioned the Brahman. He pretended to be furious at this. He said to her, 'So you suspect me ! You think me to be a thief ! This, then, is the return that you propose to make for my service to you ! I saved you from sure death. I exposed myself to grave risks in giving you shelter and protection. The return that you make to me for all this is that you charge me with theft ! You have insulted me. You will suffer for this, O ungrateful lady.'

Mata Gujri tried to calm him. But he refused to listen to what she had to say. He at once went to the Muhammedan Chaudhri of the village. He said to him, 'The Guru's mother and two sons have just come to my house. We can both earn a large reward by delivering them to the imperial authorities.'

The Brahman and the Chaudhri went to the Muhammedan official of Morinda. They reported to him about the Guru's mother and sons. He was glad to hear the news. He went with them to the Brahman's house. He took a band of armed soldiers with him.

Mata Gujri and her grandsons were arrested and taken to Nawab Wazir Khan, governor of Sarhind.

Nawab Wazir Khan ordered them to be confined in a tower of his fort. They had to pass the cold December night with the bare, hard floor as their bed. Next day, Wazir Khan ordered the children to be brought before him. Mata Gujri did not wish to part with them. The soldiers, who had come to take them away, tried to calm her and allay her fears. They said, 'The Nawab wants to see them. He will do them no harm. They will be sent back to you.' Mata Gujri still hesitated. Baba Zorawar Singh, the elder of her two grandsons, stood up and said, 'The Turks have ever been our enemies. We are now in their power. How can we escape from them? Therefore, let us go and face the governor.' Saying this, he took with him his younger brother, Baba Fateh Singh, and got ready to go. Mata Gujri hugged and kissed them. Then she said, 'Go, dear jewels of mine. Keep true to the ideals of your father and grandfather. Don't say or do anything which might bring bad name to your ancestors. May God be your protector!'

( 2 )

The two brothers were taken to Nawab Wazir Khan's court. On reaching there, they shouted loudly in one voice, '*Wahiguru Ji ka Khalsa, Sri Wahiguru Ji ki Fateh.*' All eyes were turned in their direction. Their slim, handsome persons, their calm, bright faces, and their fearless appearance, won the admiration of all present in the court. Sucha Nand, a Brahman courtier of the Nawab, advised the little princes to bow to the Nawab.

'No,' said Baba Zorawar Singh, the elder of the two. 'We have been taught to bow to none but God and the Guru. We will not bow to the Nawab.'

This bold, unexpected reply astonished every body. Even the Nawab could not help admiring the brave little one. Then he said to them, in a soft voice, 'Children, your father and two elder brothers have been killed at Chamkaur. They were infidels and deserved that fate. But you are lucky. Good luck has brought you to an Islamic *darbar*. Embrace Islam, become one with us. You will be given wealth, rank, and honour. When you grow up, I shall marry you to beautiful daughters of respectable chiefs. You will live happy lives. You will be honoured by the Emperor. If you say "No" to my offer, you will be treated as infidels are treated. You will be put to death with tortures.'

Baba Zorawar Singh, looking at his younger brother, said in a whisper, 'My brother, the time to sacrifice our lives has arrived. What do you think? What should be our reply?' Baba Fateh Singh, who had seen but six winters, replied, 'Brother dear, our grandfather, Guru Tegh Bahadur, parted with his head; he stoutly refused to part with his religion. We should follow his example. We have received the baptism of the spirit and the sword. We are the Guru's lions. Why should we fear death? It is best that we should give up our lives for the sake of our religion. I am prepared to die.'

Baba Zorawar Singh was pleased to hear the brave words of his younger brother. He then said, 'That is good, indeed. We should preserve the good name of

our noble family. The blood of Guru Arjan, Guru Har Gobind, Guru Tegh Bahadur, and Guru Gobind Singh runs in our veins. We are their descendants. We cannot do anything unworthy of our family.'

Then Baba Zorawar Singh raised his voice and said, 'Hear O Nawab. You say that our father has been killed. That is a lie. He is alive. He has yet to do a good deal of work in this world. He has to shake your empire to its roots. Know that we are sons of him who, at my age, sent his father to sacrifice his life at Delhi. We hate and reject your religion. It makes you behave like beasts of prey. We reject your offers of positions and pleasures. It has been the custom of our family to give up life but not to give up faith. Our choice is made. Let your sword do its work. We invite you to do your worst.'

These words alone were enough to inflame the haughty Nawab. But Sucha Nand chose to pour oil over the fire. He said, 'So, such is their behaviour at this tender age. What will it be when they grow up? They will follow their father's example, and destroy imperial armies. What good can be expected from them? This offspring of a cobra should be crushed in time.'

The Nawab whispered to him, 'What you say is true and wise. But I should like to make them embrace Islam. They will be valuable additions to our community. There need be no hurry. They cannot run away. Let us give them time to think and consult with their aged grandmother. We shall try again tomorrow to make them yield.'

Then, turning to the two brothers, he said, 'I do not want to act in haste. I give you time to think over the matter. Be wise and decide in favour of accepting my offer. You will live in peace, happiness, and honour. If you refuse, you will be given such tortures that your cries will be heard far and wide. Then you will be cut into pieces like fodder.'

Then he ordered them to be taken back to the tower.

( 3 )

How had it gone, all this while, with Mata Gujri in the tower ? After sending her grandsons to the Nawab's court, she sat down to pray. She kept busy in praying all the time that they remained away from her. What did she pray for ? What was her prayer and to whom was it addressed ? She prayed, of course, to God. She prayed, 'O kind Almighty Father, Sustainer of the Helpless, Strength of the Weak, Champion of the Friendless, Protector of the Unprotected, Boundless Ocean of Mercy and Kindness, help and protect my little, innocent grandsons. Give them the strength to keep firm in their faith and resolve. Keep them from faltering and wavering. So help them, so inspire them, that they may prove worthy sons of their father, worthy grandsons of their martyred grandfather. May they keep true to their family's traditions and practices ! May they be brave and strong enough to withstand all threats and temptations ! May they prefer parting with life to parting with their faith ! And O my dear jewels, keep firm ! Keep your minds fixed on God ! May He help you ever !'

Surely, God answered her prayers. We gave her grandsons what she had prayed Him to give them. At the same time, the thought waves sent by her certainly gave strength to her grandsons. We have seen how bravely and fearlessly they behaved in the Nawab's court.

Well, Wazir Khan's men led the two princes back to the tower. Mata Gujri had been waiting for them eagerly. She was overjoyed to see them safe. A look at their faces convinced her that they had kept firm in their faith. She said a brief prayer of thanks to God. Then she rushed forth to receive her 'little, priceless jewels'. She took them in her arms. She hugged them lovingly to her bosom. She kissed them, again and again. Seating them on her lap, one on each side, she asked them to tell her what had happened at the court.

Baba Zorawar Singh narrated how he and his brother had behaved, what had been said to them, and what answer they had made.

Mata Gujri was immensely pleased to hear what her grandsons narrated to her. She pressed them again and again to her bosom. She blessed and patted them approvingly. 'Well done, my priceless, little jewels,' she said. 'I am proud of you. God be thanked ! Let us offer our thanks to Him.'

Then the three stood up with folded hands. She said the prayer of thanks. Then they bowed and took their seats. Then she said, 'You are sure to be called to the court again tomorrow. Behave there as you have done today. They will try again to make you give up your faith. They will threaten you. They will tempt

you. Remember your grandfather's example and teachings. If they torture you, pray to God for strength, think of your grandfather ; think of Guru Arjan. Call upon them to sustain you, to keep you from faltering and failing.'

During the night, while her dear ones slept on her lap, Mata Gujri remained absorbed in prayers for most of the time. When they woke up early in the morning, she washed their faces, combed their hair, and helped them to dress up. Then they sat and said their morning prayers. She recited a number of hymns proper to the occasion. They listened attentively, with their minds fixed on the Guru and God.

In due course, the Nawab's men came to take the two *Sahibzadas* to his court. Mata Gujri patted and blessed them. She gave them the same advice as she had done the previous day. They gave her the same assurance as they had given her the day before.

As on the previous day, on entering the court, the two brothers shouted aloud, '*Wahiguru Ji ka Khalsa, Sri Wahiguru Ji ki Fateh.*' The Nawab gave them the same threats and made them the same offers as the day before. They stood firm and gave the same answers as on the previous day. Finally, they said, 'Our choice is made. We have declared it again and again. We know what your orders are going to be. Announce them, and let this drama come to an end. Why waste time ?'

Sucha Nand Brahman again pressed the Nawab to give immediate orders for their death. But the latter again decided to give them more time to think over. He

had still hopes that they would yield. So they were again sent back to the tower.

At the tower, Mata Gujri received them in the same way as on the previous day.

(4)

Next day, the two brave brothers were again taken to the court for the third time. On entering the court, they shouted louder than before, '*Wahiguru Ji ka Khalsa, Sri Wahiguru ji ki Fateh.*' In the court the same threats were given, and the same offers were made as on the two previous days. The bold brave sons of Guru Gobind Singh made the same reply as on the two previous days.

Then the Nawab pretended to be kind. He softened his voice. He said to them, 'O boys, I hesitate to give orders for your death. You are so handsome, so graceful in appearance, and so clever. Why are you bent upon being killed ? I feel pity for you. By the way, boys, what would you do if we were to give you your liberty ?'

The bold brave boys replied in one voice, 'Do ? We would collect our Sikhs, supply them with weapons of war, fight with you, and put you to death. That is what we would do, if released.'

The Nawab said, 'If you were defeated in the fight, what would you do then ?'

'To be sure,' replied they, 'we would collect our armies again, and either kill you or get killed.'

The bold brave boys, fearless and bold reply enraged the Nawab. His pretended kindness was gone. He said, 'Well, you will have what you deserve. I order you to be bricked alive and then beheaded.'

On hearing the Nawab's words, the qazis, Sucha Nand, and a few others said, 'That is as it should be.' But most of those present in the court sat with their heads bent low, and their eyes wet and fixed on the ground. Then Sher Muhammad, Nawab of Malerkotla, said, Nawab Sahib, your order is against the rules of Islam. The Muhammadan law forbids slaughter of tender-aged, innocent children. They have done no wrong. The rules of our religion clearly lay down that a son must not suffer for the wrongs done by his father; that everyone is responsible for his actions. So, under the laws of our religion, these boys should be allowed to go unharmed. They should not be punished for what their father has done.

But the qazis said, "What do you know of the holy law? How can you claim to know more of it or better than we? We say it firmly that the holy law bids them choose between Islam and death. They have refused to accept Islam. They should die. The Nawab Sahib's orders are wholly in keeping with the holy law."

The Nawab expressed agreement with the qazis. Two Pathans were sitting near him. He said to them, 'You know your father was killed by the father of these two boys. You may avenge his death. I hand them over to you. Kill them in the manner ordered by me.'

But the Pathans shook their heads and said, 'Nawab Sahib, our father was killed on a field of battle. If these tender ones were grown-up men, armed with weapons of war, we would certainly have fought with them and killed them. That would have been a proper revenge. We cannot strike these innocent, tender-aged children.'

Then Wazir Khan looked at his servants and courtiers present in his court. He desired to find out if any of them would come forward to carry out his orders. But none was willing to do so. One of them, when pointedly asked, said, 'We are willing to sacrifice our lives for you. But we cannot kill these children.'

The Nawab then turned to a Pathan sitting near him and said, 'You know that your father was killed by these boys' father. You should revenge your father's death. You can do that by killing these sons of his killer.'

The Pathan shook his head and said, 'No, I cannot do that. My father was killed in a fair fight. He died fighting. He was not murdered. If these tender-aged children had been grown up men, with weapons in their hands, I would have challenged them; I would have killed them in a fair fight. But I would not murder them. They have done me no wrong.'

The Nawab could make no reply. He turned to left and right, seeking someone ready to do the bloody act. But all hung down their heads as a sign of their unwillingness, as a sign of their pity for the children. At last, looking behind, he saw two Ghilzai Pathans. The Ghilzai tribe was notorious for its heartlessness

and cruelty. The Pathans offered to do the bloody deed. The two *Sahibzadas* were delivered to the Pathans. They led them away for execution.

Under the Nawab's orders, a part of the outer wall of the fort was pulled down. The two children were made to stand in the gap thus created. The Ghilzai Pathans were standing nearby. They had drawn swords on their shoulders, tightly held in their right hands. Their faces were fierce; their eyes were red; and their lips were pressed together. An official from the Nawab's staff was also there. He had been sent there to see that the Nawab's orders were duly carried out. A qazi, with a copy of the Quran in his hand, also stood nearby. Masons were ordered to erect a wall around the children. They were told, 'Take care that the bricks press well and tightly against their bodies.'

After each layer of the bricks, the qazi urged the two to save their lives by accepting Islam. But they stood calm and quiet. They were busy in reciting the *Japji* and other hymns of the Gurus. They were thinking of their martyred grandfather, Guru Tegh Bahadur. They hoped to be with him and in his arms in a few minutes.

When they were buried in the wall up to the shoulders, the Nawab himself came there. He urged them to accept Islam and save their lives. They calmly shook their heads. By now, their faces were bright and glorious, expressing hope and joy. Then the Nawab made a sign to one of the Pathans. With a stroke of his heavy sword, the Pathan cut off Baba Zorawar Singh's head. It fell on the part of the wall that lay between the two brothers. Baba Fateh Singh

bent his head and twisted his lips. It seemed that he was bowing to his martyred elder brother and kissing him.

The Nawab said to Baba Fateh, 'You have seen what has happened to your brother. I advise you, for the last time, to accept Islam. Otherwise, your head, too, will be rolling on the ground.' He replied, 'Be quick, despatch me after my dear brother, so that we may go together into the open arms of our grandfather, and into the presence of the Almighty Father.' At a nod from the Nawab, the other Pathan cut off Baba Fateh Singh's head. It fell on the wall near Baba Zorawar Singh's head. The lips of the two martyred brothers were parted a bit as in a smile. The two brothers seemed to be smiling at each other.

( 5 )

In Sarhind there lived, at that time, a rich Sikh named Todar Mal. He heard that Guru Gobind Singh's mother and two younger sons had been imprisoned by Nawab Wazir Khan. Taking a large bag of gold coins with him, he hastened to the Nawab's court. His intention was to free them by paying as much money as the Nawab would demand. But he arrived too late. The two brothers had already been put to death. He visited the site where they had been bricked alive and beheaded. After paying homage to the two martyrs, he proceeded to their grandmother. She had not yet heard of the murder of her grandsons. She sat waiting for them, praying for them, and, now and then, looking out for them. Todar Mal tried to speak. But repeated sobs choked his voice. His eyes were melting into tears.

On seeing this, Mata Gujri became alarmed. She said, 'Tell me the truth. Why are you so broken down with sorrow? What has happened to my dear grandsons? Have they proved too weak? Have they given up their faith to save their lives? Have they turned their backs on their brave, noble family? If they have so fallen, tell me. I shall weep with you at their fall. But if they stood firm in their faith, if they preferred death to proving false to their faith and family, tell me that with cheer. We shall then rejoice together. Then I shall depart happily and speedily after them.'

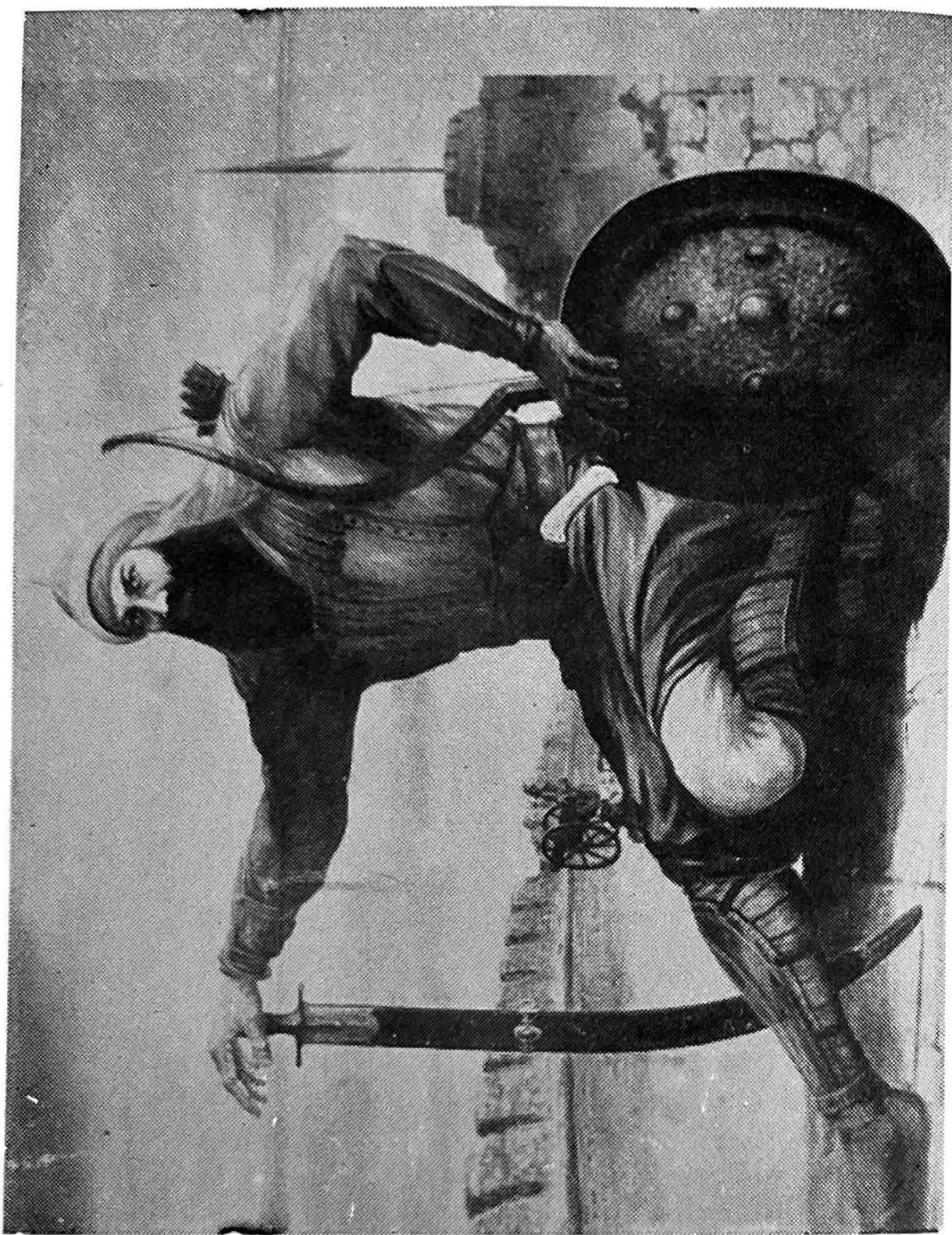
With his eyes melting into tears, and a voice choked with sobs, Todar Mal told her of her grandsons' martyrdom. On hearing this, she said, 'Well! Have my darlings already gone to meet their grandfather? O my dear ones, take me with you! I had taken upon myself the duty of looking after you. But, my dears, you have gone away. What have I to do here now? O my soul, fly after them to the bosom of the Merciful Father. Farewell, O my dear ones Whom I am leaving behind. We shall meet again in our True Home.'

Saying this, she closed her eyes and began to repeat *WAHIGURU*. Soon she was gone to meet her grandsons. Todar Mal touched her feet and sobbed in anguish.

Then Todar Mal went to the Nawab. He sought his permission to cremate the three bodies. He was told, 'You may do so. But for their cremation you will need a piece of land. You will have to pay for it. You may have the requisite land by paying as many gold coins as, placed closely together, would completely cover it.'

Todar Mal chose the site. He spread out gold coins to cover the whole piece of land that he had selected. He took out the two martyrs' bodies from the wall. He took out Mata Gujri's body from the tower. He took the three bodies to the site selected and purchased by him. He cremated them and later buried their ashes there.

On the spot where the three bodies were cremated was later, erected a gurdwara called *Joti Sarup*. At the place where the two *Sahibzadas* were bricked alive and beheaded, stands the gurdwara called *Fatehgarh Sahib*. Nearby, at the site of the tower (*burj*) in which the three were imprisoned, and where Mata Gujri breathed her last, stands a gurdwara called *Mata Gujri's Burj* (Tower).



Baba Banda Singh Bahadur.

## VII

### BABA BANDA SINGH BAHADUR

( 1 )

Baba Banda Singh was born on October 27, 1670 at Rajauri, in the Poonch district of western Kashmir. His father, Ram Dev, was a Rajput farmer. He was called Lachman Dass in his childhood. His father gave him training in farming, riding, shooting, swordsmanship, and hunting. From his early days, he was tender-hearted. Once, while hunting, he shot a female deer. He saw it dying before his eyes. He also saw two young ones fall from its womb and die in pain. The sight had a very deep and lasting effect on his tender heart. He resolved to become a *Sadhu*.

He left home. He met one Janki Das Bairagi and became his disciple. He became a Bairagi. He took the name of Madho Das. He wandered from place to place with a band of Bairagis. He came to the Panjab. There he met a *Sadhu* named Ram Das near Kasur. Madho Das became a disciple of *Sadhu* Ram Das. But he did not obtain peace of mind. He again began to wander from place to place. Thus wandering about, he came to Nasik, on the banks of the river Godavari. There he entered the hermitage of an old *Jogi* named Aughar Nath. He became his disciple. From Aughar Nath he learnt the art of working magic and miracles. After his teacher's death, he moved on to Nander. There he established a *dera* or monastery of

his own. He spent his time in practising *Jogic* exercises and developing magical powers. He took delight in practising tricks of magic on his visitors.

Guru Gobind Singh visited his monastery in September 1708. He tried to practise his tricks of magic on the Guru. But he failed miserably. He concluded that he had found his master, at last. He fell at the Guru's feet and said, 'I am your *banda* or slave. Pardon me. Save me. I shall act as your *banda*. I shall carry out your orders whatever they be.'

( 2 )

Guru Gobind Singh converted Madho Das Bairagi to his faith. He baptized him as a member of the Khalsa. Madho Das ceased to be a Bairagi. He became a Singh (Lion) of the Guru. He called himself the Guru's Banda or slave. He wanted Banda to be his name. Hence, he came to be addressed as Banda. After Baptism, his name was changed to Banda Singh. He is generally known as Baba Banda Singh Bahadur, or simply Banda Bahadur.

The Guru instructed him in the principles of his faith. He became acquainted with the history of the Sikhs and their Gurus. He learnt about the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev, Guru Tegh Bahadur, and the *Sahibzadas* or Guru Gobind Singhs' four sons. He learnt about the terrible hardships which the Guru and his Sikhs had suffered.

On learning all this, he was filled with righteous indignation. The Guru's *amrit* aroused the Rajput spirit in him. He yearned to be in the battle-field as Guru Gobind Singh's Saint-Soldier.

He said to the Guru, 'O true King, permit me to go to the Panjab. Permit me to punish those who committed such cruel deeds.'

His wish was granted. He was appointed the leader or commander of the Khalsa. The Guru gave him a drum and a banner. They were to serve as emblems of secular authority. He bestowed on him five arrows from his own quiver. They were to serve as a pledge of victory. He deputed five Sikhs to accompany him. They were to help and advise him. He also gave him a number of *hukmnamas*. They were letters addressed to leading Sikhs in the Panjab and to the general body of the Khalsa. They called upon all Sikhs to help Banda Singh in every way.

At parting, the Guru said to him, 'Remain pure in conduct. Never touch another's wife. Be true in word and deed. Look upon yourself as a servant of the Khalsa who will be the Guru after my return to Almighty Father's presence. Always act on the advice of the five Sikhs who will go with you. Never think of declaring yourself as a Guru. Do not set up a sect of your own. Always help the poor and the needy. Never harm the innocent. Have full faith in God and Guru Nanak. Always act on the tenets of the Sikh religion. As long as you act upon these instructions, victory will ever wait on your standard. If, at any time, you find yourself in some hopeless situation, pray to God and shoot one of my arrows. God will help you.'

Thus raised to the position of the commander of the Khalsa, Banda Singh proceeded to the north. On reaching near Sehri and Khanda, he despatched Guru Gobind Singh's *hukmnamas* to the leading Sikhs in the

Panjab. He called upon them to join him. He told them that he had come to punish Wazir Khan and his assistant Sucha Nand for their having killed the Guru's younger sons. He added that he would also punish the hill-rajas who had ill-treated the Guru.

The Sikhs flocked to him from all places. He marched towards Sarhind. More and more Sikhs joined him on the way. He went along, punishing tyrants in various places. On November 26, 109, early in the morning, he fell upon Samana. Sayyid Jalal Din of this city had beheaded Guru Tegh Bahadur. Two other Pathans of the same city had cut off the heads of the younger *Sahibzadas* at Sarhind. The Mughals, Sayyids, etc., of the place opposed him. But they were all killed.

Then he fell upon other centres of the Muslim rulers' oppression and tyranny, and punished the tyrants there. Such centres included Kanjpur, which was Nawab Wazir Khan's village. Then he attacked the town of Kapuri. The commander of that palace, Qadam Din, was a notorious bad character. He used to forcibly take away young and beautiful Hindu women and girls, and keep them in his harem. Qadam Din was suitably punished. His palace was burnt.

Baba Banda Singh then turned his attention to Sadaura. That was another centre of Muslim oppression. The Hindus of that place were not permitted to cremate their dead. They were not permitted to perform any religious ceremony. Cows were killed before their houses, and their blood and intestines were left in the streets. The ruler of that place, Usman Khan, was an object of special anger and hatred for the Sikhs.

There was a special reason for this. A great Muslim saint of that place, Sayyid Budhu Shah, had helped Guru Gobind Singh in the battle of Bhangani. Usman Khan had, later, tortured and killed Sayyid Budhu Shah on that account. Sadaura was attacked. A severe battle was fought. Usman Khan was defeated. He and his agents were hanged.

In this way, he went on capturing all centres of Muslim oppression. Then he advanced towards Sarhind. This city and its governor, Nawab Wazir Khan, were most hateful to the Sikhs. It was here that the two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh had been bricked alive and murdered. It was Wazir Khan who had been subjecting the Guru to many hardships at Anandpur. He had attacked the Guru at Chamkaur, where the later's two elder sons were killed. He had pursued him to Muktsar, where his forty Saved Ones were martyred. Again, it was Wazir Khan who had sent the Pathan who killed the Guru himself at Nander. On account of all this, the Sikhs were burning with rage to wreak vengeance on the hateful ruler of this hated city.

Sikhs from all parts of the Panjab now joined Baba Banda Singh's forces. He advanced towards Sarhind. Wazir Khan came out with all his army to meet the Sikhs. In addition to his own forces, he had with him the forces of Lahore, Eminabad, Hissar, etc. A severe and bloody battle was fought on the plain of Chappar-Chiri, about 15 kilometres from Sarhind. Wazir Khan was killed. His forces ran away. Sarhind was taken two days later. The city was plundered and mostly destroyed. People like Sucha Nand were also punished. The wall where the two younger *Sahibzadas*

had been bricked was also pulled down.

Baba Banda Singh continued his conquests. Soon, he became master of the Panjab east of Lahore. For his headquarters he selected Mukhlispur, which was a pleasant hilly place near Sadaura. He repaired its old fort and renamed it Lohgarh or Iron Castle.

( 3 )

Emperor Bahadur Shah heard the news of Baba Banda Singh's successes. He was then in the Deccan. He at once returned to the capital. He moved a huge army against Baba Banda Singh. The latter waited for it at Lohgarh. The imperial forces arrived and encamped near Sadaura. The Sikhs fell upon them with showers of arrows and musket-balls. The imperial army suffered a heavy loss. It was about to retreat. But then fresh forces came to its help. The Sikhs went back into the fort of Lohgarh.

The imperial forces, more than sixty thousand strong, besieged Lohgarh. But the place was so well fortified that the imperial army dared not attack it for some time. The Sikhs were short of provisions. They had no hope of standing a long siege. They are said to have eaten their horses and other beasts to satisfy their hunger. They became desperate. They decided to rush out and cut their way through the enemy's ranks. Accordingly, Baba Banda Singh rushed out of the fort one night. He disappeared with his men into the hills of Nahan.

Soon after his escape from Lohgarh, Baba Banda Singh issued circular letters, called *hukmnamas*, to the Sikhs of various places. He called upon them to join him at once. In response to this call, Sikhs from all

directions joined him at Kiratpur. He decided to attack and punish some of the Hindu hill-chiefs who had been troubling Guru Gobind Singh. Raja Bhim Chand of Kahlur was the first to attract his attention. He was ordered to submit. But he chose to offer resistance. He was defeated. The other Rajas submitted without any fight. The Raja of Chamba became Baba Banda Singh's friend and ally. He gave the Sikh leader in marriage a beautiful girl from his own family.

For some time, Baba Banda Singh stayed in the northern hills. Occasionally, he came down to extend his influence in the plains. He conquered some places like Rajpur, Brahmpur, Kalanaur, and Batala. But then very strong Mughal armies pursued him. He had to retire to the hills again.

Then an imperial order was issued, commanding all government officials to kill Sikhs wherever found. The order was strictly enforced. Sikhs and their sympathisers were slaughtered in large numbers. The Emperor then issued another order. All Hindus were ordered to shave off their beards. That would enable them to be distinguished from the Sikhs. The Emperor knew that the Sikhs would never, even under pain of death, cut or shave their beards, or whiskers, or any hair whatever of their bodies. Baba Banda Singh was obliged to evacuate Lohgarh. He took refuge in the Jammu hills. There he married a second time and made a settlement of his own, now called Dera Baba Banda Singh.

After a stay of over one year in the hills, Baba Banda Singh reappeared in the plains. He conquered Kalanaur and Batala once more. Then he was attacked

by a huge Mughal army. The army was helped by a number of Hindu Rajas. In the first encounter with the imperial forces, Baba Banda Singh fought so heroically that he was very near giving them a complete defeat. But the odds were too heavy against him. He retreated to the village of Gurdas-Nangal, about six kilometres to the west of Gurdaspur. The imperial forces laid a siege to the village. The provisions were soon exhausted. The besieged began to suffer extremes of hunger. In the absence of grain, flesh of horses, asses, and other animals was used as food. They ate grass and leaves of trees. Then they removed the bark of trees and broke off their small shoots. They dried and ground them, and used them in place of flour. They also collected the bones of animals, ground them, and used the powder in place of flour. Some Sikhs cut flesh from their own thighs, roasted it, and ate it.

In spite of all this, the Sikhs withstood the huge imperial forces for eight long months. But how long could this continue ? About eight thousand Sikhs had died. The remaining were reduced to mere skeletons. They had become too weak to wield any weapons. The imperial army entered the fortress. Baba Banda Singh and his famished followers were taken prisoners. Baba Banda Singh's wife and his three-year old son were among the prisoners.

( 4 )

From Gurdas-Nangal Baba Banda Singh and his companions were taken to Lahore. There they were paraded in the streets. Then they were despatched to Delhi. Baba Banda Singh was bound in chains in four places and put in an iron cage. The cage was placed

on an elephant's back. His companions, about two hundred in all, were also in chains.

Zakriya Khan, son of the governor of Lahore, was in charge of these prisoners. He thought that the number of prisoners was too small for being presented to the Emperor. Hence he caught every Sikh that he could find in the villages on the way. The number of prisoners was made seven hundred and forty. Thousands more were killed. The heads of two thousand Sikhs were hung on spears and carried with the prisoners. In addition to these, seven hundred cart-loads of Sikhs' heads also accompanied the horrible show. If a cart be supposed to have contained fifty heads, 700 carts must have contained 35,000 heads !

On reaching Delhi, Baba Banda Singh and the other Sikh prisoners were taken in a procession through the main streets of Delhi. At the head of the procession, were carried two thousand heads of Sikhs. They were raised on bamboo poles. Their long hair waved in the wind. Then came Baba Banda Singh, seated in an iron cage placed on the back of an elephant. After his elephant, came the other Sikh prisoners. They were tied two and two on saddleless camels.

For miles and miles, the route was lined on both sides with troops and filled with merry crowds. They had gathered to enjoy the '*tamasha*'. They were beside themselves with joy. A Muhammadan writer saw the whole scene. He calls it a *tamasha*. He writes, 'The Musalmans were dancing with joy. The unfortunate Sikhs were happy. They were contented with their lot. There was not the slightest sign of sorrow or dejection on their faces. In fact, most of them seemed to be happy and cheerful. They were merrily singing their sacred hymns.

About two weeks later, began the murder of the Sikh prisoners. One hundred of them were killed every day. Every batch was told, 'Those of you who embrace Islam will not be killed.' But not even a single Sikh thought of saving his life in that way. They had no fear of death. They called the executioner *Mukt* or the Deliverer. They cried out to him joyfully, 'O *Mukt*! Kill me first.' They even disputed and argued with each other for priority in death. This work of butchery went on until all the prisoners were beheaded.

Among the Sikh prisoners was a tender-aged newly-married youth. He had been arrested from a village on the way. His widowed mother had followed the prisoners to Delhi. She wanted to save her son's life. She was told, 'Go and tell the Emperor that your son is not a Sikh. The Emperor will spare his life.' She went to the Emperor and said, 'My youthful son is not a Sikh. He is a prisoner in hands of Baba Banda Singh's men. Kindly order his release.'

The widow's appeal moved the Emperor. He ordered her son's release. She hurried with the order, and gave it to the officer in charge of the executions. He called up the youth and said to him, 'As you are not a Sikh, you are free.' The boy said, 'Who says I am not a Sikh?' The Mughal officer said, 'Your mother, there, says so.' The boy said, 'She is telling a lie. I am heart and soul a Sikh. Send me quickly after my comrades.'

He ran back to the place of execution. He was beheaded. He joined his martyred comrades.

These murders took place in March 1710. Baba Banda Singh and his leading companions were kept

alive for about three months. His turn came in the first week of June, 1710. He and his twenty-six companions were taken out in a procession through the streets of the old city. He was taken to the tomb of Emperor Bahadur Shah, near the Qutab Minar. There he was paraded round the tomb. He was then offered the usual choice between Islam and death. He chose to die rather than give up his faith.

Then began his tortures. His baby son was placed in his lap and he was asked to kill him. He refused to do so. The executioner then cut the child into pieces. Pulling out the dead child's palpitating heart, he thrust it into Baba Banda Singh's mouth. Baba Banda Singh stood calm and unmoved like a statue. He was completely resigned to the Will of God. He was reciting Sacred Hymns and repeating God's Name all the time.

Then the executioner began the horrible deed of executing Baba Banda Singh. First of all his right eye was taken out, and then, his left. Then his hands and feet were cut off; his flesh was torn with red-hot pincers, and finally, his head was chopped off. Baba Banda Singh remained calm and composed to the last. Thus did he achieve martyrdom and life everlasting. This happened on June 9, 1716.

## VIII

### BHAI TARA SINGH

Bhai Tara Singh was a Jat Sikh resident of village Van, in the district of Amritsar. He was truly a saint-soldier. He was a highly religious man, with a kindly, generous heart. At the same time, he was a strong, brave, and fearless fighter. He was very popular with the Sikhs. He was ever in the forefront of every *Panthic* undertaking. He had already won laurels in the campaigns of Baba Banda Singh. He was most energetic and fearless in helping his brothers in faith, as well as others in need. His doors were open to receive everyone in need or trouble. He ran a free kitchen for all.

Sahib Rai, *Lambardar* of Naushehra, was proud, cruel and haughty. He was a tyrant. He used to let loose his horses in the green fields of the Sikhs. No one dared to drive them out. The Sikh peasants bore this quietly for a pretty long time. Then they decided to meet him and request him to give up letting loose his horses in their fields. They said, 'Your horses eat away our crops. We have no other means of making a living. We are being driven to starvation. If you desire, we shall supply green fodder for your horses every day. Please don't let them loose in our crops.'

The *Lambardar* became furious. 'What is all this nonsense?' said he. 'You are really an ungrateful lot. Don't you know what attitude the Muhammadan

rulers have towards you Sikhs ? It is indeed risky for me to let you live in my village. I give you shelter in spite of the risk. What thanks do I get from you ? Be careful. My horses will go about at their free will. If you misbehave again, I shall report against you to the Mughal authorities. Then you will learn what it means to insult a *Lambardar* of theirs. You talk of my horses trespassing into your fields. Take care lest my scissors should trespass into your beards and long hair.' By this he meant that he would cut off their hair and beards.

The poor Sikh peasants were convinced that the *Lambardar* would not change his ways. He would not let them live in peace. They felt that continued stay in his village meant want, hunger, and starvation. He might even do something far worse. So they decided to leave the village.

Bhai Tara Singh heard of their sad plight. He sent for them. He undertook to give them food and lodging until they could make some suitable arrangements for themselves. They readily accepted his invitation and hospitality. They came and began to live in his village.

Sahib Rai's horses continued to graze freely in the peasants' green fields. But the peasants did not dare complain. Some daring Sikhs from Bhai Tara Singh's village decided to punish the haughty *Lambardar*. They drove away his horses in broad daylight. They sold them in a far off place. The money so obtained was used towards meeting the expenses of feeding the refugees from Naushehra.

Thereupon, Sahib Rai lodged a complaint with Mirza Jaffar Beg, Faujdar of Patti. He said to him, Tara Singh is an old rebel. He is very dangerous. He gives shelter to thieves, dacoits, and bad-characters. They commit raids all over the land. The lives and property of the people are insecure. An example must be made of this dangerous rebel. Otherwise others will begin to imitate him. A widespread unrest will be the result.

The Faujdar chose to believe every word spoken by Sahib Rai. He was a cruel, fanatic Muslim. He was ever on the look out for an excuse and opportunity to haul up and punish Sikhs. He sent a detachment of twenty-five mounted soldiers and eighty foot soldiers to proceed against Bhai Tara Singh. They intended to take the village by a surprise attack at the dead of night. But their plan was foiled by a brave saint-soldier, Bhai Baghel Singh Dhillon.

This brave Khalsa happened, at that hour, to be out in the jungle near the village. He saw the soldiers approaching the village. He at once understood what their mission was. He decided to block their way, so that Bhai Tara Singh and his companions be not taken by surprise. With a shout of '*Sat Sri Akal*,' he suddenly fell upon the advancing soldiers, as a tiger would fall upon a flock of sheep. With one stroke he cut off the head of a nephew of Jaffar Beg. Another nephew met the same fate. Many more soldiers were cut down by him before he was overpowered. He died fighting like a true saint-soldier. The noise of the fight roused Bhai Tara Singh and his companions. They rushed out to meet the invaders. But the latter took to their heels before Bhai Tara Singh could give them battle.

**Receiving payment for killing Sikhs.**



Mirza Jaffar Beg hurried to Lahore and reported the whole matter to Khad Bahadur Zakriya Khan, governor of Lahore. The latter at once despatched a strong force against Bhai Tara Singh. It consisted of two thousand and two hundred fully armed horsemen. They had forty cannons and five elephants. The force was under the command of Momin Khan, the governor's deputy. With all that force, Momin Khan was to proceed against Bhai Tara Singh and his twenty-two companions. Such was the terror which the brave Sikhs inspired in the Mughal rulers' hearts.

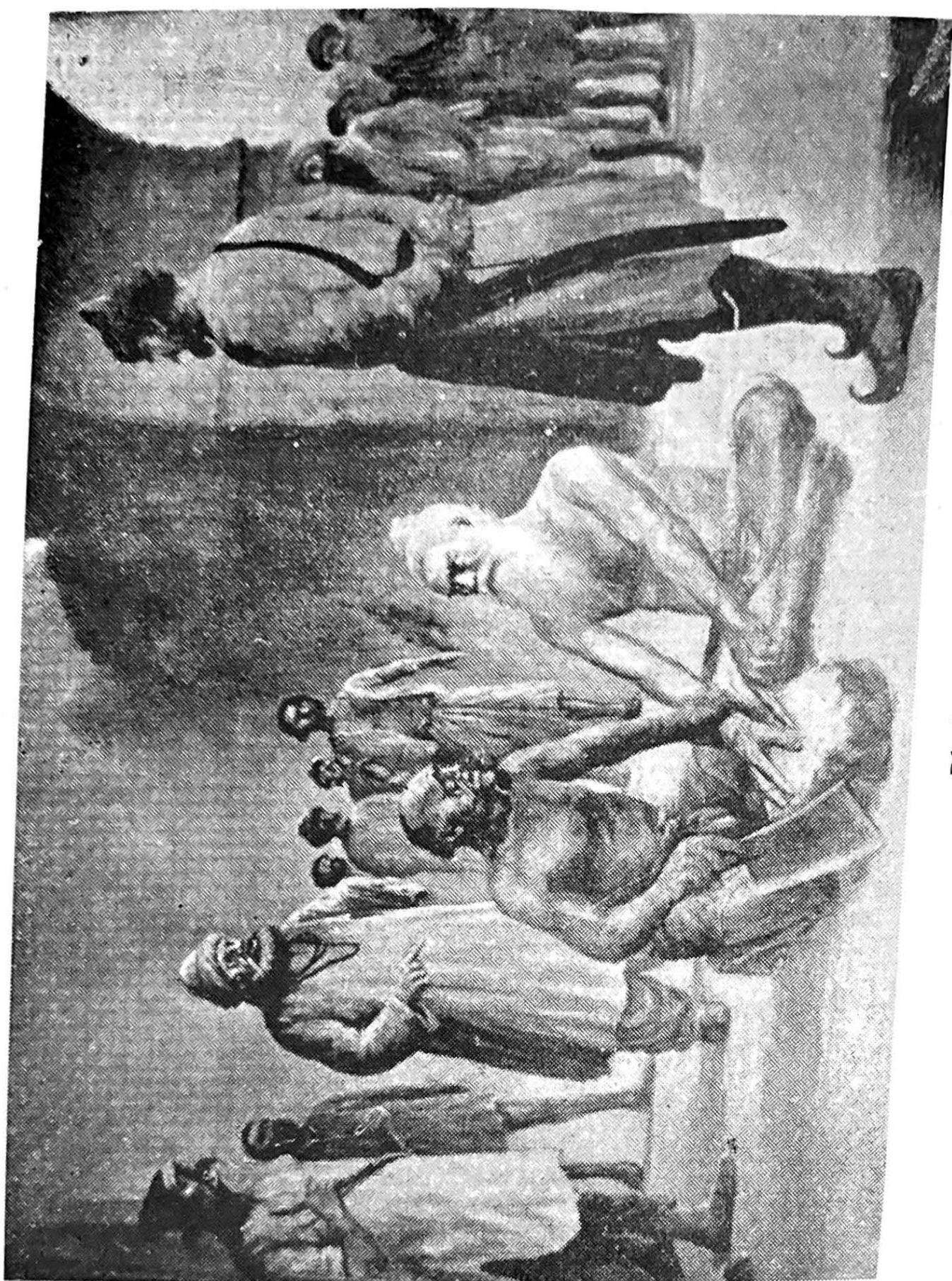
The news of this expedition was conveyed to Bhai Tara Singh by a secret messenger from the Sikhs of Lahore. Another man, named Ghumanda, an Uppal Jat, offered to act as a scout for the Lahore army. At the same time, he sent information to Bhai Tara Singh.

Some men went to Bhai Tara Singh. They advised him to go away and take shelter in the jungle. But he refused to save his life by flight. He thought that to run away would be a cowardly act, unbecoming of a Khalsa. He was determined to face death with boldness, and sell his life very dearly.

The invaders came at nightfall. They surrounded the village. As they advanced to attack, they were greeted with a rain of shots and arrows. Bhai Tara Singh and his twenty-two companions held the army at bay during the night. They were able to inflict heavy loss on the enemy. The invaders were very near losing their hearts. They got the impression that Bhai Tara Singh had a very large force with him. They began to doubt their own power to succeed against him.

But the rise of sun betrayed the true number of Bhai Tara Singh's men. The invaders regained courage. They renewed their attack. Bhai Tara Singh and his men fought with wonderful bravery. One by one, his men fell martyrs after performing wonderful feats of valour and swordsmanship. At length, Bhai Tara Singh was left alone. He sprang into the enemy's ranks, roaring like a lion. With his sword he cut his way right up to the spot where Momin Khan was. The latter was riding on an elephant. Bhai Tara Singh aimed a heavy blow at Momin Khan. But, as he leapt up to reach the man, he was surrounded by a large number of Mughal soldiers. They fell upon him from all sides and felled him to the ground. Thus did Bhai Tara Singh die gloriously after a valiant fight against too heavy odds. He fell in a noble cause. He sacrificed his life in order to serve and save his brothers in faith. He was thus a true martyr. His memory is cherished by the Sikhs, as of course, it richly deserves to be.

His martyrdom occurred in the year 1725 A.D.



Bhai Mani Singh.

## IX

### BHAI MANI SINGH

( 1 )

Bhai Mani Singh was born at a village named Kaibowal. The village was later destroyed during Nadir Shah's invasion. Its ruins are near Sunam, district Patiala. His father was a Jat Sikh, named Chaudhri Kala. His parents called him Mania. When he was about five years of age, his parents visited Anandpur. They did so to see and pay homage to Guru Tegh Bahadur. Guru Gobind Singh, then known as Sri Gobind Rai, was of about the same age as Mania. They became playmates and friends. When Chaudhri Kala and his wife decided to return home, Mania refused to accompany them. He expressed a wish to stay at Anandpur and play with Sri Gobind Rai. His wish was granted. He became a life-long companion and devoted Sikh of Guru Gobind Singh.

Mata Gujri took charge of Mania. She treated him like her own son. The two playmates lived together, dined together, played together, and learnt together. Mania became a great scholar.

When Guru Gobind Singh introduced his new baptismal or *amrit* ceremony, he baptized his playmate Mania, too. Thereupon, Mania became Mani Singh. The Guru held him in high esteem and consulted him on all matters. Mani Singh gave his whole-hearted assistance and support to Guru Gobind Singh in the

establishment of the Khalsa Panth. He rendered most active and useful service in all schemes which the Guru started for the uplift of his people.

When Guru Gobind Singh evacuated Anandpur in December 1704, Bhai Mani Singh was with him. Under the Guru's orders, he conducted Mata Sahib Kaur and Mata Sundri to Delhi. There he busied himself in serving them. In 1705-06 he accompanied them to Damdama Sahib. There under, Guru Gobind Singh's direction, he wrote a copy of Guru Granth Sahib. Later he accompanied the Guru to the Deccan. When the Guru was about to depart from this world, he sent Bhai Mani Singh to Delhi alone with Mata Sahib Kaur. At Delhi, he busied himself in serving Mata Sahib Kaur and Mata Sundri. He also did much to preach and popularize the Sikh faith.

( 2 )

After the martyrdom of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur, some Sikhs began to regard him (Baba Banda Singh) as Guru. They were called *Bandeis*. But the strict followers of Guru Gobind Singh, or *Tat Khalsa*, believed that the system of personal Guruship had ended with the tenth Guru. The *Bandeis* began to claim that they should have an equal share in the management of the gurdwaras and other affairs of the Panth. But the *Tat Khalsa* refused to accept this claim. They did not favour such divisions in the Panth. Still, the *Bandeis* persisted in their claim. Much tension was created between the two parties.

Mata Sundri, who was residing at Delhi, came to know of these troubles. She sent Bhai Mani Singh to

Amritsar, along with Sri Kirpal Singh, maternal uncle of Guru Gobind Singh. He was charged with the duty of bringing about peace and unity among the Sikhs. He was appointed *Granthi* (or head priest) of the Darbar Sahib. He was desired to organize service in the temple and to manage its affairs. He was further told by her, 'Don't send any money from the offerings to me. The whole income should be spent there. It should be spent in maintaining, the service, *langar*, and other needs of the institution.'

Bhai Mani Singh and his companion arrived at Amritsar in the beginning of 1721 A.D. In consultation with the notables of the city, they put the affairs of the temple in order.

A few days after came the Baisakhi fair. Elaborate arrangements were made for the grand celebrations. Thousands of Sikhs gathered round the tank. The *Tat Khalsa* and the *Bandeis* also gathered in large numbers. They were preparing to come to blows. But Bhai Mani Singh came between them and saved the situation. He suggested that, instead of fighting, they should decide their claim by casting lots. He took two slips of paper. On one he wrote, '*Fateh Wahiguru Ji Ki*'. These words were used by the *Tat Khalsa* when meeting and saluting each other. On the other slip he wrote '*Fateh Darshan*'. These words were used by the *Bandeis* for the same purpose. Both the slips were immersed in water at *Har Ki Pauri*. The agreement was that the party whose slip rose first to the surface, would be considered to have carried the day. For some time neither slip came up to the surface. It seemed as if both the slips had sunk for ever. The parties stood in great suspense. At long last, the slip with *Fateh Wahiguru Ji Ki* came to the surface.

The *Tat Khalsa* was declared to have won. The *Bandeis* took it as the Guru's verdict. They agreed to give up their claim.

In this way, on account of Bhai Mani Singh's wisdom and sweetness, the dispute was settled in a peaceful manner.

( 3 )

Bhai Mani Singh was the most learned and respected man of his time. As Granthi of the Darbar Sahib, he did very valuable work for the Panth. His masterly exposition of *Gurbani* was appreciated by all. It drew immense congregation every day. His saintly life and affectionate manners won everybody's esteem and admiration. He wrote a number of scholarly books, like the *Gian Ratnavali*. He also compiled the *Dasm Granth*. He prepared a revised edition of Guru Granth Sahib. In the current accepted edition, the compositions of the Gurus and the Bhagats are arranged in the order of *Ragas* or musical measures. The words in every line are joined together. This fact makes it difficult for one to read the hymns correctly. Bhai Mani Singh wrote down all the hymns of every Guru and every Bhagat together. In the beginning he wrote down all the hymns of Guru Nanak, then those of Guru Angad, and so on. He also wrote the words of the hymns separated from each other. But his work was not approved by the Panth.

For years the Muslim rulers had carried on a large-scale massacre of the Sikhs. All efforts were made to prevent the Sikhs from assembling in their favourite shrine, the Darbar Sahib, Amritsar. Therefore, for years the Diwali festival had not been held there. In

the year 1738, Bhai Mani Singh applied to the governor of Lahore for permission to hold the Diwali festival in the temple. The permission was given on the condition that Bhai Mani Singh should pay to the government five thousand rupees after the fair. The fair was to last for ten days. Bhai Mani Singh hoped that he would be able to pay the sum out of the offerings to be made by the Sikh visitors. He issued invitations to the Sikhs of all places. In response to that invitation, thousands of them started from their homes.

But the governor's intentions were not good or friendly. He sent a large force to Amritsar under the command of Diwan Lakhpati Rai. This man was a bitter and sworn enemy of the Khalsa. The governor said that the force was intended to keep order. But the real purpose was to prevent the Sikhs from gathering in large numbers. The force was to stay at Ram Tirath, near Amritsar. It was to march towards the city just on the day of the fair. Seeing it advancing towards the city, the Sikhs would be frightened, and would disperse of their own accord. Such was, in fact, the result. The *mela* (fair) dispersed at the approach of the Mughal army.

Bhai Mani Singh had expected that the fair would be attended by a large number of the Khalsa. He had expected that the fair would last for ten days. He had hoped that the offerings made by the Sikhs would enable him to pay to the government the agreed sum of five thousand rupees.

But no fair had been held. No gathering had taken place. No offering had been received. Hence Bhai Mani Singh was unable to pay the agreed sum of five thousand rupees. He was arrested for his failure to

make the payment. He was taken to Lahore in chains. There he was condemned to death with tortures. He was told that he could save his life by embracing Islam. He stoutly and resolutely refused to give up his religion.

Orders were given that his body be cut to pieces, limb by limb. As the executioner started his work, Bhai Mani Singh sat calm and serene. He was absorbed in meditating on God and repeating the Guru's word.

Bhai Mani Singh was martyred about one month after the day on which the Diwali festival was to have been held in 1738 A.D. His *Shahid Ganj* is outside the Masti Gate of Lahore, and near the Lahore Fort.

## X

### BHAIS BOTA SINGH AND GARJA SINGH

The Mughal Emperor of Delhi and the Mughal governor of Lahore had taken vows to destroy the Sikhs, root and branch. Orders were given that all Sikhs—men, women, and children were to be put to death. It was declared lawful to plunder their homes and seize their property. Their houses were to be looted and plundered. They were to be hunted down like wild beasts. Not only government officials, but even notable Hindus and Muhammadans, vied with one another in this cruel campaign of loot, arson and murder.

Special rewards were offered for the capture and destruction of the Sikhs. It was announced, 'Any person giving information which leads to the arrest of a Sikh, will get ten rupees. Fifty rupees will be awarded to him who brings the head of a Sikh. Eighty rupees will be given to him who captures and brings a Sikh alive.'

It has to be borne in mind that eighty rupees of those days would be equal to a few thousand rupees of today. So, the rewards were very tempting, indeed.

The whole machinery of the government was put into motion to crush the Sikhs. Even non-official Zamindars were made to lend a hand in this campaign of ruthless genocide. Some Zamindars used to send cartloads of heads to Lahore. This campaign was most virulent in the Majha tract.

As a result of this fierce persecution, most of the Sikhs left the plains. They took shelter in places away from human habitations. These places were the Shivalik hills, the Lakhi jungle, and the sandy deserts of Rajputana. The few who still chose to remain in the Majha, had to pass their days in bushes and forests, here and there. Sometimes, some persecutors or evil-wishers of theirs would boast that the Sikhs were afraid to appear in the plains. Such taunts would cause some daring Sikhs to come out of their hiding places, and make their presence known and felt. One such daring Sikh was Bhai Bota Singh.

Bhai Bota Singh was a Jat Sikh of Bharana, now in Pakistan. He had a companion named Bhai Garja Singh Ranghreta. They used to come occasionally to Amritsar at night in order to have a dip in the sacred tank. They spent the rest of the day in the bushes near Tarn Taran. Bhai Bota Singh was a deeply religious man. He passed his life in reciting the Guru's sacred hymns and meditating on God. By nature, he was a peace-loving saint. But, at the same time, he could be a mighty soldier, if necessary.

It was towards the end of 1739, when, one day, a party of wayfarers noticed Bhai Bota Singh and his companion near Nurdī (Serai Nurdin). The two were returning from a secret pilgrimage to the Darbar Sahib at Amritsar. 'Look there', said one of the wayfarers, 'there goes a pair of Sikhs'. 'O, no', said another. 'They can't be Sikhs. There is no Sikh left anywhere in the neighbourhood. All of them have been either killed or driven away. Zakriya Khan, governor of Lahore, has proudly proclaimed that he has exterminated the Sikhs ; that no Sikh exists in the Panjab.' But, said the

first man, 'I am sure that they are Sikhs.' 'In that case,' said the other, 'they must be a pair of cowards, jackals, hiding about to save their skins. The Sikhs are not subject to such fears.'

These taunting remarks stung Bhai Bota Singh. A Singh of Guru Gobind Singh was, to him, as brave as a lion. That a Singh or lion be called a jackal was more than he could stand. The Guru's Khalsa, he felt, could not be exterminated. Zakriya Khan must be made to realize that his boast was empty, that the Khalsa was in existence and would ever continue to exist, in spite of all that he and his ilk might do. Indeed, the taunt awoke the soldier in that saint. He decided to come out in the open, make his presence felt, by Zakriya Khan and his government, and to maintain the prestige of the Khalsa. His companion was of the same view.

Bhai Bota Singh and his companion came out from the bushes. They took their position on the then Grand Trunk Road near Nurdī (Sarai Nurdin), a few miles west of Tarn Taran. In those days, this road connected Delhi and Lahore. As a mere bravado or show of courage, Bhai Bota Singh began to collect toll tax of one anna per cart and one pice per donkey load. None dared to refuse the demand. All paid it readily and quietly. Nobody dared to make a report to the government. Their arms or weapons were big sticks cut from *kikar* trees.

This went on for some time. Bhai Bota Singh's presence was, no doubt, felt by those who used the Grand Trunk Road. But it had not been yet felt by the government. Bhai Bota Singh did not like it. He had taken this position not for collecting toll. His object was

only to prove to the fanatical rulers that, in spite of their all-out efforts to exterminate the Sikhs, they were very much in existence. Therefore, he wrote direct to the governor, Nawab Zakriya Khan, at Lahore, announcing himself and the tax he was levying on travellers. He gave it to a traveller bound for Lahore and asked him to deliver it to the governor there. The traveller undertook to do so.

The letter was, of course, in Panjabi. Its words were as follows :

“Chithi likhai yun Singh Bota,  
Hath hai sota,  
Vich rah kharota,  
Anna laya gadde nun,  
Paisa laya khota,  
Akho Bhabi Khano nun  
Yun akhe Singh Bota”.

In English the words would read :

“Thus writes Bota Singh a letter,  
With a big stick in hand  
On the road I stand,  
Levying an anna for a cart  
And a pice for a donkey-load.  
Tell sister-in-law Khano  
That this is a message from Bota Singh.”

The letter was a clear and daring challenge to the haughty governor. He was red with rage. He, at once sent a detachment of one hundred fully armed horsemen, under the command of Jalal Din, to arrest Bhai Bota Singh.

On reaching near Nurdī, they saw the two Sikhs standing on the road. They held big *kikar* sticks in

their hands. They had no other weapon ; no axe, no lance, and no sword. Approaching them, Jalal Din called upon them to surrender. Bhai Bota Singh replied, ‘Sikhs know no surrender. We are unused to that sort of act. You would certainly like very much to take us alive to your governor and earn his good opinion. He would like very much to see me cut into pieces, limb by limb, like Bhai Mani Singh Ji. But we refuse to oblige you and your governor. We shall give up our lives, but we shall charge a heavy price for them. We shall die fighting. But we shall kill many before we die. Come on, and taste our big sticks. Send four of your best and strongest swordsmen against us two big-stick wielders. Come on ! “*Sat Sri Akal*”.

Jalal Din sent four of his bravest and strongest soldiers. He said to them, ‘Fall on these beasts, and fell them with your sharp swords.’ They advanced, crying, ‘*Ya Ali*’. Bhai Bota Singh and Bhai Garja Singh struck them repeated blows with their big sticks. Thus thrashed, the four Mughal soldiers were felled to the ground. Another batch of four met the same fate. Then Jalal Din ordered all his soldiers to make a joint attack.

Bhai Bota Singh and Bhai Garja Singh were surrounded by shouting swordsmen. The unequal fight could not last long. The brave Sikhs fell martyrs at last ; but only after over a dozen Mughal soldiers had been despatched by them to hell.

Thus did they make their presence felt by the government of Zakriya Khan. Thus did they demonstrate that they were not cowards, but bold and daring

saint-soldiers of Guru Gobind Singh ; that they were not jackals, but lions. Thus did they show to Zakriya Khan that his boast of having exterminated the Khalsa was altogether empty ; that the Khalsa was very much in existence, and would continue to exist, in spite of all that he and his ilk might do.

This happened in the year 1739 A.D.

## XI

### BHAI MEHTAB SINGH

The Mughal government had started an all-out campaign against the Sikhs. As a result, most of the Sikhs had left the plains. They had taken shelter in places like the Shivalik hills, the Lakhī jungle, and the sandy deserts of Rajputana. Sometimes, however, they used to come out of their hiding and make their presence felt. One such occasion was Nadir Shah's invasion of India.

Nadir Shah of Persia had overrun the Panjab and plundered Delhi in the early months of 1739 A.D. On the way back, he decided to avoid the heat of the plains. So he took a northerly route under the Shivalik hills. A number of Sikhs were passing their days in those hills. They decided to plunder the invader and plunderer. They fell on the rear on the hindermost part of his army. They took away much of his booty.

This action astonished Nadir Shah. He called a halt at Lahore. He enquired from Zakriya Khan, governor of Lahore, 'Who are these people who have dared to interfere with my onward march ? Who are these bold mischief-makers ?'

Zakriya Khan replied, 'They are a group of *fakirs*. They visit their Guru's tank at Amritsar twice a year. After bathing, they disappear.'

'Where do they live ?' asked Nadir Shah.

'Their saddles are their home,' replied the governor.

'Take care,' said Nadir Shah, 'the day is not far off when they will take possession of your country.'

Nadir Shah's remark cut Zakriya Khan to the quick. He resolved to intensify his campaign against the Sikhs. He re-started the practice offering rewards for their capture and destruction. Thousands of Sikhs were killed. Soon, the plains seemed to have been cleared of them.

Still another action was taken against them. The Darbar Sahib of Amritsar was taken into possession. Its approaches were guarded by military pickets. The latter prevented the Sikhs from assembling in their favourite sacred place.

Massa Ranghar of Mandiali was put in charge of the Darbar Sahib. He was the most active of the Chaudharies engaged in capturing and destroying the Sikhs. He turned the holy precincts into a stable. The inmost temple was turned by him into a *nautch-house* (dance hall). He used to smoke and drink, and enjoy the dance of public women there.

The news of this disrespectful use of the sacred temple was conveyed by some persons to a party of Sikhs living in Jaipur, Rajputana. One of those Sikhs was Bhai Mehtab Singh. He was a Jat Sikh of Mirankot, near Amritsar. He was astonished at the news. He said to the messenger, "You heard this outrage on the sacred place, and yet you live and go about telling the news to others ! Why was not Massa Ranghar killed then and there ? Is no Sikh left there ?"

'No,' replied the messenger. 'There is no Sikh there with greater sense of honour than those who have run away to places like Jaipur in order to save their lives.'

Bhai Mehtab Singh was a strong-bodied brave young man. The messenger's taunt stung him like a scorpion. He stood up at once, took up his sword, and said, 'I shall go, cut off Massa's head with this sword, and bring it here.'

He saddled his horse and got ready to gallop away. Bhai Sukha Singh of Mari Kambo offered to go with him. Both galloped off towards Amritsar. On reaching near the sacred city, they disguised themselves as Muhammadans. They filled two bags with well-rounded pieces of broken earthen pots. Each of them placed one of the bags before him on the horse. They looked like Muhammadan *Lambardars* come to pay their land revenue.

They reached Amritsar in August 1740. They entered the precincts of the Temple. To the guards they said, 'We have come to pay land-revenue to our Chaudhri.' They were allowed to go in. They tied their horses outside the main gate. The *ber* tree to which the horses were tied still exists. They came to Massa Ranghar. He was seated on a cot, smoking a *hukka*. He was intoxicated with wine. With half-closed eyes he was listening to the music of dancing girls. The sight made their blood boil. Bhai Sukha Singh stood watch near the door. Bhai Mehtab Singh went in and fell on the tyrant like lightning. With one stroke of his sword he cut off Massa's head. Massa's companions were taken by surprise. They were shocked.

They ran about in terror. Before they could recover from their surprise and shock, Bhai Mehtab Singh and Bhai Sukha Singh had made good their escape and galloped away.

Zakriya Khan soon heard of Massa Ranghar's end. He was beside himself with rage on hearing of the daring deed of the two Sikhs. He summoned all Chaudhries of the parganas around Amritsar. He ordered them to find out and bring to him the murderer of Massa. A handsome prize was promised for his capture.

Harbhagat Niranjinia of Jandiala was a sworn enemy of the Sikhs. He had helped the government in hunting them up. He came forward and promised to do his best in this case, too. He discovered that Bhai Mehtab Singh had murdered Massa. He conveyed this information to the governor. Thereupon, Bhai Mehtab Singh's village, Mirankot, was surrounded by a strong force. It was under the command of one Nur Din, Harbhagat accompanied the force.

Bhai Mehtab Singh, of course, was not found there. But his little son, Rai Singh, was there. Before leaving the village, Bhai Mehtab Singh had placed his little son under the protection of the village *Lambar-dar*. The latter's name was Natha Khaihra. Nur Din sent for him. He was desired to bring the child with him. But Natha did not want to hand over the child to those butchers. Lifting him on his shoulder, he left the village by a backdoor. Three or four persons were with him. Nur Din's men learnt of his escape. Harbhagat, along with some soldiers, hurried after Natha and his companions. He overtook them soon and attacked

them. A fierce fight took place between the two parties. Nathanand and his companions were killed. Rai Singh was seriously wounded. Harbhagat took him for dead. He went back, leaving the wounded child there. A Kambo woman happened to pass that way. She saw the wounded child. She found that he was still alive. She took him home. Under her motherly care, Rai Singh recovered in due course.

In the year 1745, Bhai Mehtab Singh came to his village in order to see his family and friends. Some evil person informed the local Muslim official of this fact. Bhai Mehtab Singh was captured, chained, and taken to Lahore. There he was told to choose between Islam and death. He stoutly refused to give up his faith. He chose death. He said, 'No true Sikh can ever agree to give up his faith, to turn his back on the Guru. I shall die a Sikh.' Thereupon, he was publicly broken on the wheel. That was a most torturous mode of killing. Bhai Mehtab Singh remained calm all the time. He did not utter even a single groan or cry of pain. He kept meditating on God and repeating His Name.

His head was then cut off. It was hung up in Hiramandi. His body was thrown into a ditch.

Bhai Mehtab Singh was killed, of course, and killed with utmost brutality. But he is not really dead. Like all martyrs, he is still alive. His memory will last as long as lasts the holy Harmandar at Amritsar. We know that he tied his horse to a *ber* tree outside the holy place. That tree still exists. Visitors to the Golden Temple respectfully touch and salute the said *ber* tree. They recall and admire the daring, noble deed of the great Sikh martyr. He thus lives and shall live for ever.

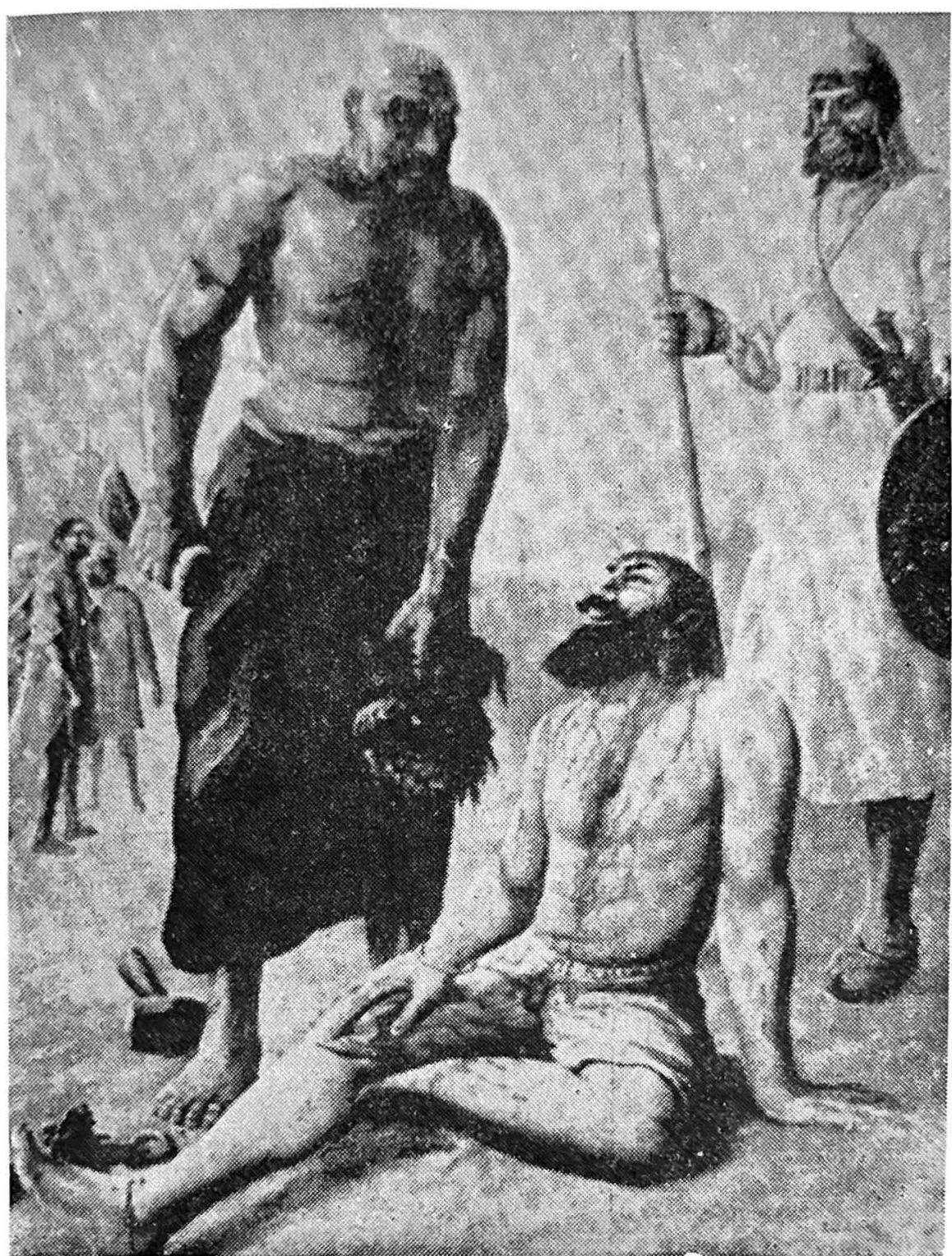
## XII

### BHAI TARU SINGH

Khan Bahadur Zakriya Khan, governor of Lahore, was carrying on a cruel, all-out campaign against the Khalsa. Hence, all daring and desperate Sikhs had gone away to places where the Mughal armies dared not trouble them. So they had become out of the reach of the government.

However, in several small villages there yet lived some gentle, harmless Sikhs. They were peaceful and peace-loving by nature. Daring military adventures were against their grain. They were averse to active clashes with the government. They wanted to live and work in peace. They kept engaged in peaceful pursuits. At the same time, they practised the main principles of life taught by their Gurus. They earned their living with honest labour ; they shared their honest earnings with those in need, irrespective of caste or creed ; they recited *Gurbani* and kept meditating on God. They were friends and helpers of all who needed help. Such persons were loved and honoured by their neighbours ; yes, even by their Muslim neighbours.

One such Sikh was Bhai Taru Singh. He was a Jat living in Poola, a small village in the present district of Amritsar. He was a young man of twenty-five. He was very gentle, kind-hearted and pious. He was a lover of peaceful life. He enjoyed helping



Bhai Taru Singh.

and serving those who needed his service and help. He loved all and he was loved and honoured by all.

As we have seen, most of the daring, adventurous Sikhs had been driven from their homes. They lived in bushes and jungles. One of such bushes and jungles was Baba Buddha's *Bir*. It was quite near Bhai Taru Singh's village. Bhai Taru Singh took special pains to serve these exiled brethren of his.

He cultivated his fields. Most of what he produced was offered by him to those whom the iron rule had driven into the wilderness. His aged mother and youthful sister were gentle and pious like him. They took delight in assisting him in every way.

What they did for their exiled brethren was this. The two ladies ground the grain and baked cakes of bread. Usually, the cakes were made of a mixure of wheat and gram flour, salted and spiced. At night, Bhai Taru Singh took a basketful of them into the jungle nearby. He also carried a bucketful of milk. His exiled brethren used to be waiting for him. He distributed the cakes and the milk among them. He used to sit and talk with them during a good part of the night. Sometimes, he happened to have learnt of some fresh government move against them. He warned them of it.

This went on for some years. We have already mentioned a vile, mean enemy of the Khalsa. He was Harbhagat Niranjania of Jandiala. He was ever at pains to harm the Sikhs. He came to know of the work being done by Bhai Taru Singh. He was cut to the quick to hear that Bhai Taru Singh was very popular with his neighbours, even with his Muhammadan neighbours. He decided to put an end to Bhai Taru Singh's life and activities.

So determined, he went to Zakriya Khan, governor of Lahore. He said to him, 'In a small village named Poola, there lives a dangerous rebel Sikh. His name is Taru Singh. He has the outward garb of a gentle, innocent, peace-loving man of religion, But really, he is a wolf in sheep's clothing. He is a friend and helper of thieves and dacoits. He helps and shelters men of bad character. He also supplies milk and food to Sikhs living in the jungles. Your orders are that nobody should help or harbour these outlaws. He does both. He thus disobeys your orders. He is a dangerous rebel. He should be hauled up and punished.'

Zakriya Khan rewarded Harbhagat for this useful information. He sent a body of armed men to arrest Bhai Taru Singh and bring him to Lahore. His men went post-haste to Poola. They arrested not only Bhai Taru Singh, but also his young sister. They wanted to take her, too, to Lahore. Bhai Taru Singh's fellow-villagers paid a handsome bribe to the government party. In this way, they secured her release.

Bhai Taru Singh was chained and taken to Lahore. There he was put in prison. In the prison he was subjected to severe, inhuman tortures for many days. He was asked to embrace Islam and get his hair cut. He was told, 'If you do that, you will get in a marriage a beautiful damsel of a high Mughal family. You will be given riches and high position. You will lead a life of happiness and pleasure. If you refuse, your hair will be cut, you will be subjected to still severer tortures.'

'Finally, you will be beheaded or broken on the wheel. Be well-advised. Don't throw away your life and all that it can offer you.'

Bhai Taru Singh firmly and defiantly refused to give up his faith. He said, 'Even if I were offered kingship of the whole world, even if all the beauties of Paradise were offered to me as my personal servants, even if the treasures of the entire world were placed at my feet, I would not give up my religion. It is far more precious and dear than all these. I would not let my hair be cut, not even a single one. I am prepared to die. May God and the Guru let me die with my hair all intact.'

Zakriya Khan said, 'Your God and Guru are powerless here. I am here to grant your prayer. Your hair shall not be cut. It will remain intact. Your scalp along with the hair shall be scraped off. What do you say to that ?'

Bhai Taru Singh replied, 'That will be very good of you, indeed. Kill me in any manner that you like. Be quick. I am eager to join my martyred brethren at the feet of the Almighty and All-loving Father of all.'

Zakriya Khan gave the orders. Bhai Taru Singh was taken to the Nakhas, outside the Delhi Gate. Thousands had been butchered there in the near past. A shoemaker was ordered to scrape off Bhai Taru Singh's scalp. Bhai Taru Singh stood the ordeal bravely. He went on reciting the *Japji* and repeating the Name of God. The scalp with the hair intact was scraped off. It was thrown before him. He bowed, and thanked God and the Guru. He was thankful that his hair had not been cut.

After that, he was taken back to the prison. The tortures were repeated. After a few days he let his soul

fly from his body and go to the feet of the All-loving Father. This happened on the 1st of July 1745.

His torturer, Zakriya Khan, had died a few hours before him, after having borne intense suffering. He had an attack of kidney pain. He could not pass urine. His abdomen swelled up till breathing became difficult.

In this hour of terrible suffering, he thought within himself, 'I have put a saintly, innocent person to horrible tortures. May be that my agony is due to that act of mine.' He sent a messenger to Bhai Taru Singh, asking for forgiveness. Bhai Taru Singh said, 'I have no ill-will against him. All happens as willed by God. As far as I am concerned, he is forgiven. But he has got to render an account of his doings. The inmates of Hell are waiting to welcome him.'

As soon as these words were spoken, Zakriya Khan was able to pass urine. His abdomen subsided. His pain was gone. But he died a few hours before Bhai Taru Singh's soul was released from his body.

### XIII

## THE LESSER HOLOCAUST (Chhota Ghalughara—1746)

The Mughal government had vowed to destroy the Sikhs, root and branch. A large number of Sikhs, like Bhai Taru Singh, Bhai Mani Singh and Bhai Mehtab Singh had been martyred. General orders had been issued that no one should give any help or shelter to any Sikh. Mughal armies went about killing every Sikh found anywhere.

A band of Sikhs, driven from place to place, came to Eminabad, now in the district of Gujranwala, Pakistan. They wanted to pay a visit to Rori Sahib, a gurdwara there sacred to the memory of Guru Nanak. They had been without food for several days. They wanted to purchase foodstuffs from the town. They wrote a letter to the chief officer of the place. In it they sought his permission to purchase foodstuffs from the town.

His name was Jaspat Rai. He was a bitter, sworn enemy of the Sikhs. He ordered them to go away at once, or he would himself drive them away. The Sikhs pleaded, ‘We have had no food for several days. We shall stay for only one night to feed ourselves. We shall do no harm to anybody. We shall go away tomorrow morning.’

Jaspat Rai was a proud, hot-tempered man. He flew into a rage. He fell upon the Sikhs with all the

force that he had with him. They resisted the attack. A Ranghreta Sikh named Nibhau Singh, got on to the elephant of Jaspat Rai. With one stroke of his sword, he cut off Jaspat Rai's head. Seeing this, the Mughal army ran away.

Now, Jaspat Rai had a brother named Lakhpur Rai. The latter was a minister of Yahiya Khan, governor of Lahore. He was an active opponent of the Sikhs. When he heard the news of his brother Jaspat Rai's death, he became mad with rage. He went to Yahiya Khan. He flung his turban at his feet and said, 'I shall tie it on my head only when I have destroyed the Sikhs, root and branch. I am a Khatri. Guru Gobind Singh, who created the Khalsa, was also a Khatri. This Khatri, here before you, will destroy what was created by that Khatri. I shall not call myself a Khatri until all Sikhs are destroyed, root and branch.'

He got a general order issued for destruction of the Sikhs. To begin with, all Sikhs—men, women, and children—living in Lahore were arrested. They were made over to sweepers for execution. A deputation of Hindus waited upon Lakhpur Rai. They tried to dissuade him from spilling innocent blood. But he would not listen to them. The terrible order was carried out. All the Sikhs of Lahore were murdered in cold blood. Their only fault was that they were Sikhs. They died for their faith. They became martyrs, all of those men, women and children. None of them agreed to save his or her life by giving up his faith.

It was announced with the beat of drums that no one should read the Sikh scriptures. It was further ordered that anyone taking the name of the Guru would

be arrested and killed. The use of the word 'granth' was also forbidden. The word 'pothi' was to be used in its place. Many volumes of Guru Granth Sahib were collected and thrown into wells and rivers.

A huge army, under the command of Yahiya Khan and Lakhpur Rai, set out to destroy the Sikhs. This army consisted of the Mughal army and thousands of soldiers sent by the Hindu and Muhammadan helpers of the Mughal government. About fifteen thousand Sikhs had taken shelter in the reedy marshes of Kahnuwan. The heavy-clothed troops and their artillery could not pass through the marshes to reach near the Sikhs. But a way was cut through the reeds for the movement of the troops. With the help of guns, the Sikhs were pushed towards the Ravi. The Sikhs crossed the river. They were closely followed by Lakhpur Rai.

The only course open to the Sikhs was to go to the hills of Basohli. They hoped that the Hindu population there would give them shelter. But their hopes proved false. The people there had already received orders from Lahore to give no shelter to the Sikhs. As the Sikhs approached, they were received with showers of stones and bullets. They had to cry a halt.

They were in a desperate position. In front of them was a steep mountain. On that mountain were people who were against them and were showering bullets and stones on them. To their right was a fast-flowing, flooded river. Behind them was the enemy coming in hot pursuit. They had no food and no ammunition. Their horses were weak with hunger and fatigue. They were too weak to go up the mountain.

They decided to go back to the Majha. But the Ravi was in flood. It was impossible to cross it. It

was decided, therefore, that those who had no horses, should go towards the mountains and try their luck there. Those who had horses were to cut their way through the enemy.

Those who went to mountains managed to pass about six months in Mandi and Kulu. They had to face great hardships. But they were able, at last, to reach Kiratpur and join the Khalsa there.

The main body of the Sikhs rushed through the pursuing army. They were surrounded. Hundreds of them were killed. Some were taken prisoners. The remaining Sikhs were pursued into a jungle. There they were attacked by the army as well as by the people—Hindus and Muslims—collected from the neighbouring villages.

About two thousand Sikhs were able to cross the Ravi. They entered the Riarki tract of Gurdaspur. It was the month of June. They were hungry, barefooted, and wounded. The burning sand added to their sufferings. But they uttered no cry of pain. They never thought of surrender. They never thought of saving themselves by giving up their faith. They were determined to live and die as Sikhs. They tore off pieces from their clothes and tied them on their naked feet. In this way they crossed the hot sandy plain and reached the river Beas. They crossed that river near Sri Hargobindpur. Then they made straight for the Sutlej. That river they crossed near Aliwal and entered the Malwa.

Lakhpur Rai had got tired of fighting. He returned to Lahore. In this campaign he must have killed at least seven thousand Sikhs. Three thousand were

taken as prisoners to Lahore. There they were insulted and tortured. They were told that they could save themselves by embracing Islam. But none was prepared to purchase life at such a price. They were all beheaded at the place called Nakhas. Their heads were piled up in the form of pyramids. Their bodies were buried under the walls of a mosque.

This wholesale massacre of the Sikhs occurred in 1746 A.D. It was called *Chhota Ghalughara* or The Lesser Holocaust. As we shall see, another much greater and wholesale destruction of the Sikhs occurred in 1762 A.D. That was called *Wadda Ghalughara* or The Great Holocasut.

Over ten thousand Sikhs—men, women, and children—were brutally butchered in this campaign. They could all have saved their lives by giving up their faith and accepting Islam. But none of them even thought of saving his or her life in that way. They chose not to live as apostates, but to suffer and die as Sikhs. They preferred suffering and death to apostacy. They lived, suffered, and died as true devotees of their faith. They achieved glorious martyrdom. They are all remembered with respect and admiration by students of history, as well as, of course, by all Sikhs. They died to achieve everlasting life. Let us all bow our heads to them.

## XIV

### SARDARS SUBEG SINGH, SHAHBAZ SINGH

Sardar Subeg Singh was an influential Jat zimindar of Jambar, in the district of Lahore. He was also a government contractor. He was a great scholar of Persian. He was a wise and upright man. He proved useful to Zakriya Khan on a number of occasions. One such occasion may well be narrated here.

For many years the Mughal government pursued a policy of persecuting the Sikhs. It was determined to root them out completely. Thousands over thousands were murdered in cold blood. But the Sikhs just refused to be finished. They continued to grow. They never thought of giving up their faith and saving their lives.

The martyrdom of persons like Bhai Tara Singh produced a wave of indignation among the Sikhs of the Majha. They decided to retaliate. They resolved to take revenge. They began to fall on government treasuries and caravans. Parties coming with chests of revenue meant for Lahore were waylaid and looted. As a result for some years no money from revenue could reach the government treasury. The forces of the government tried to punish the offenders. But they were unable to contact them ; for the Sikhs did not live in houses or forts. After each attack, they used to run away to their camps in the forests.

This story of persecution and revenge went on for some time. The government, at last, felt tired of

this method of dealing with the rebels. It decided to pacify and conciliate them. Accordingly, in 1733 A.D. Zakriya Khan represented his difficulties to the Delhi government. He suggested that a policy of conciliation had better be given a trial. With that end in view, he proposed that a grant be made to the Sikhs and a title be conferred on their leader.

The proposal was accepted. The next thing needed was to persuade the Sikhs to agree to the proposal. Zakriya Khan felt that to persuade them would not be an easy task. He turned to Sardar Subeg Singh for help. He said to him, 'If you succeed in bringing them round, you will do a good service to me and my government. It will be remembered, appreciated, and duly rewarded.'

Sardar Subeg Singh agreed to do his best. He agreed to meet the Sikhs and try his skill. At that time the Khalsa had assembled at the Akal Takht, Amritsar. He went there and held discussion with them. He informed them of the offer made by the government. He offered them the title of 'Nawab' for their leader, along with a Jagir of about one lakh rupees. They would not accept the offer. They were about to reject it outright. But Sardar Subeg Singh succeeded in overcoming their objections. They accepted the offer.

In this way, some sort of peace was made between the Mughal government and the Sikhs. Zakriya Khan felt relieved a good deal. He appreciated the part played by Sardar Subeg Singh in bringing about the reconciliation.

But, after some time, the campaign of persecution was started once again. In the heat of that

campaign even Sardar Subeg Singh was not spared. He was arrested along with his son, Sardar Shahbaz Singh. How it happened is given below.

Sardar Subeg Singh had a son named Sardar Shahbaz Singh. He used to read in a Muhammadan school under a qazi. The boy was unusually handsome, bright, and promising. The qazi took a fancy to him. He wished to convert him to Islam. He wanted to marry his daughter to him.

The qazi tried his utmost. He used all his skill. But Sardar Shahbaz Singh was firm in his faith. Neither threats nor tempting offers could make him change his resolve. At this, the qazi's fondness for the bright, handsome boy was gone. He was determined to finish him. He reported to the government against him. He said, 'The boy has used disrespectful words against the Prophet. He has said foul things against Islam. This *kafir* deserves no mercy. He deserves death.'

On the basis of this report, Sardar Shahbaz Singh was arrested and taken to Lahore. He was to stand his trial before the governor. At the same time, his father, Sardar Subeg Singh, was also arrested and imprisoned. It was said against him that he supplied information to the Sikhs.

But Zakriya Khan died before he could see the end of his victims. He was succeeded by his son, Yahiya Khan. This person was more cruel than his father. He had no soft corner in his heart for Sardar Subeg Singh. He took up his case and pursued it to the bitter end.

Sardar Subeg Singh was asked to give up his religion or suffer death at the wheel. He refused to give up his religion. Thereupon, he was put on the

wheel and turned on it. The pain was sharp and intense. But it did not break his spirit. Then his son, Shahbaz Singh, was told, 'You can save your life by accepting Islam.' He refused to give up his faith. Thereupon, he was bound to the wheel. He was turned on it before his father's eyes. Both bore the torture with great patience. They went on shouting, '*Akal*' all the time. At intervals, the wheels were stopped and the two were asked, 'Do you agree to embrace Islam ?' Every time they shook their heads and shouted, 'No'. The wheels were set in motion again. The two kept on shouting, '*Akal* ! *Akal*'.

After some time, the voice of the child became feeble. The wheel was stopped. The question was put to him, 'Do you agree to embrace Islam ?' The child lowered his head as a sign of acceptance. Sardar Subeg Singh promptly looked into the eyes of the child and said, 'Say "*Akal* ! Shout *Akal*!" Think of Baba Zorawar Singh and Baba Feteh Singh.' In a moment ; the child recovered himself. He was himself again. He gave a hearty shout of '*Akal*'. Their wheel was turned again. The wheels had sharp knives arranged around them. They went on working mercilessly. The shouts of '*Akal*' grew feebler and feebler. Then they ceased altogether. Both left their bodies. They went away to join the ranks of illustrious Sikh martyrs.

This occurred in the year 1745.

## XV

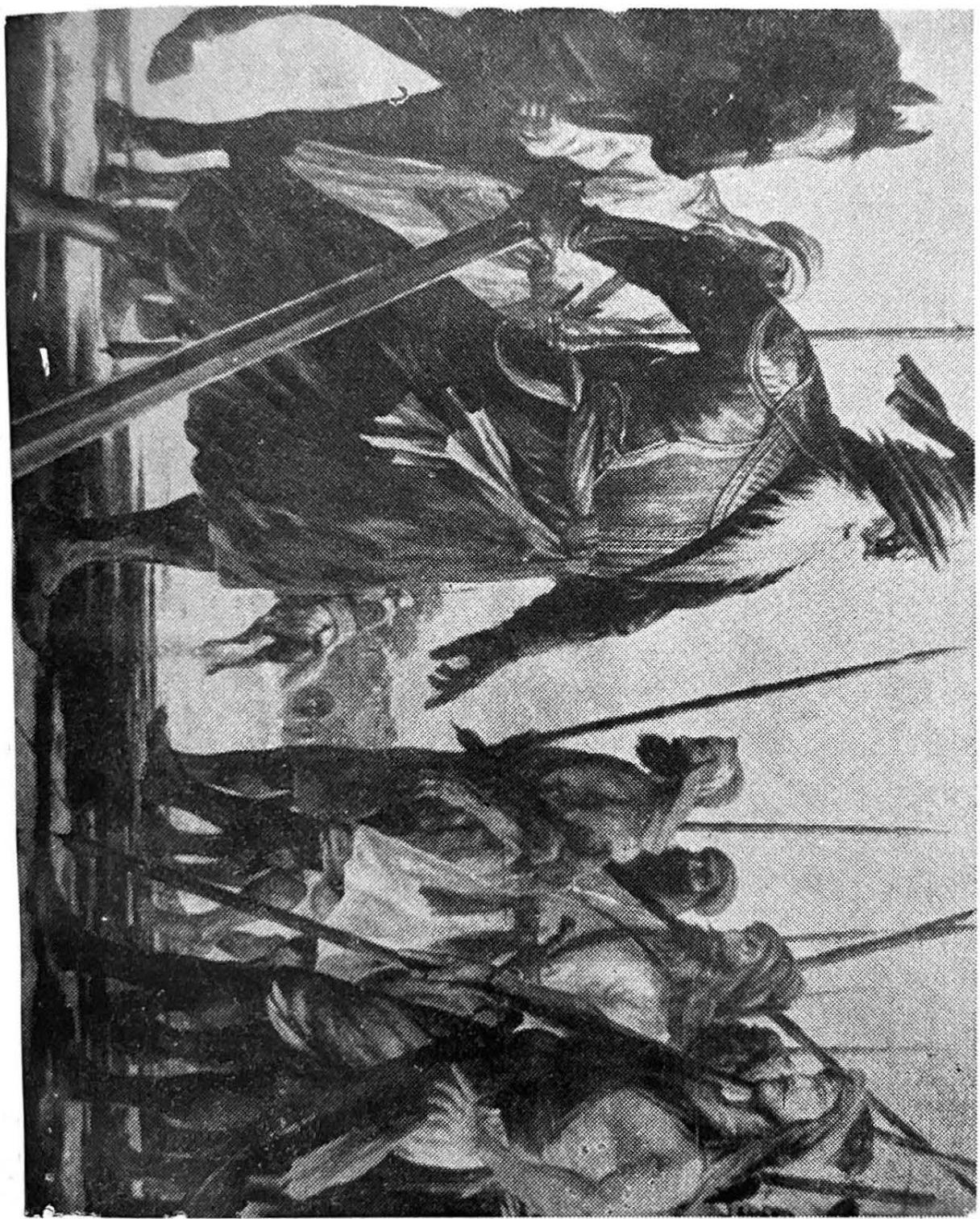
### BABA DIP SINGH

Baba Dip Singh was a Jat Sikh belonging to the village Pahuwind in the district of Amritsar. He was tall, strong, and uncommonly brave. He had received baptism from the hands of Guru Gobind Singh himself. He was a bold and fearless saint-warrior, ever ready to risk his life for the *Panth*. He took a praiseworthy part in many battles of Baba Banda Singh and helped him to win victories.

Besides being a strong and fearless warrior, he was a great scholar. In fact, he was one of the most scholarly Sikhs of his time. Along with Bhai Mani Singh, he helped Guru Gobind Singh in preparing the final text of Guru Granth Sahib at Damdama Sahib. Afterwards, too, he stayed and worked at that sacred place. He was in charge of that gurdwara. He spent his time in preparing copies of Guru Granth Sahib. Some he wrote with his own hand. Others he got written under his direct supervision. Copies of the Sacred Book written in his own hand or issued by him with his approval were accepted as most authentic.

At the time that we are talking of, Ahmad Shah Abdali was in India on his fourth invasion. On his return from Delhi, he stayed for some time at Lahore. He had experienced a good deal of trouble at the hands of the Sikhs. Hence, while staying at Lahore, he sent out a force to punish the Sikhs at Amritsar. The city was plundered. The sacred buildings, includ-

Baba Dip Singh.



ding Sri Darbar Sahib, were demolished. The sacred tank was filled up.

The news of what had been done to the holy places at Amritsar soon reached Damdama Sahib. On hearing it, Baba Dip Singh felt as if an arrow had pierced his heart. He at once decided to go to Amritsar and avenge the insult to the sacred places there. No sooner said than done. He started immediately. A band of five hundred Sikhs volunteered to accompany him. He announced that the coming Diwali festival would be celebrated at Amritsar. Sikhs went on joining him as he went along. By the time he reached Tarn Taran, he had about five thousand men with him. All of them were eager to win martyrdom in the sacred cause.

All of them bathed in the sacred tank of Tarn Taran. Then they offered prayers. They put on the dress of bridegrooms. They tied festal ribbons called *ganas* on their wrists. They sprinkled saffron on their robes. Thus dressed, they marched forth to wed Princess Death.

Jahan Khan, deputy governor of Lahore, learnt that the Sikhs were gathering at Amritsar to celebrate their annual fair. At that time, one Haji Atai Khan was moving about with a large force. His object was to put down opposition and disorder in the countryside. Jahan Khan ordered Atai Khan to march upon Amritsar and punish the Sikhs. At the same time, a *jehad* or holy Muhammadans war was proclaimed with the beat of drums. All Muhammadans were called upon to join the army of *mujahids*, or soldiers bent upon holy war, against the rebel Sikhs.

Jahan Khan was thus able to collect two thousand horsemen. He proceeded at their head to

meet the Sikhs advancing under Baba Dip Singh. The two forces met near Gohalwar, halfway between Tarn Taran and Amritsar. The Sikhs fought with such force and bravery that the Muhammadan army fled in all directions. Jahan Khan tried to rally them with threats. But his threats had no effect on the fleeing *mujahids*.

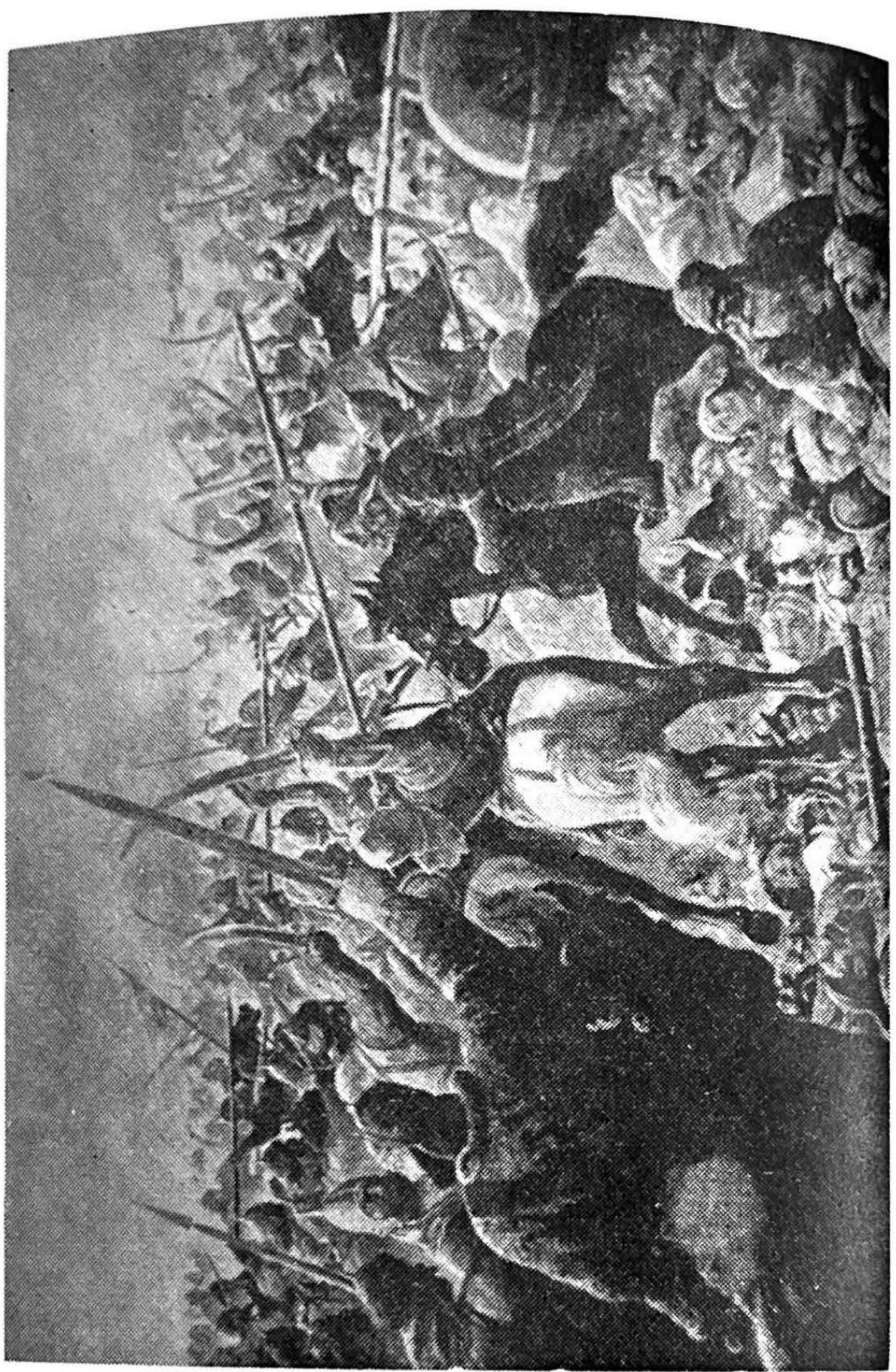
By then, Atai Khan came with a large army and artillery. His arrival turned the odds against the Sikhs. A fierce battle began. The Sikhs, with Baba Dip Singh at their head, went on fighting and advancing towards Amritsar. When they reached near Ramsar, Baba Dip Singh received a mortal cut in his neck. He was about to fall. Just then, a Sikh near him said, 'Babaji, you had prayed that you should fall a martyr in the precincts of Darbar Sahib. But you seem to be departing here.'

Baba Dip Singh's head had been almost separated from his neck. On hearing the Sikh's words, he rallied at once. He held and supported his head with his left hand. With the right hand he went on wielding his heavy *Khanda*, or two-edged sword, and cutting down the enemies.

Thus fighting, he reached the precincts of Sri Darbar Sahib. His vow and prayer were fulfilled. He fell there to become a martyr. This happened in the year 1757.

At the place where he was wounded stands a temple in his memory. It is called Shahid Ganj Baba Dip Singh.

The Great Holocaust.



## XVI

### THE GREAT HOLOCAUST (Wadda Ghalughara—1762)

In 1761 the Sikhs under Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia occupied Lahore. They proclaimed him king. He coined money in the name of the Guru. The Khalsa gathered that year at Amritsar to celebrate their annual day of Diwali. They passed a resolution to capture the strongholds of the allies and helpers of Ahmad Shah Abdali. These people, it was thought, were proving a hindrance in the liberation of the country.

The nearest helper and ally of the foreigner was Aqil Das Niranjania of Jandiala. He was a sworn enemy of the Sikhs. He had always aided their enemies. Sardars Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia informed him of the decision of the Khalsa. It was thought that he would submit and make a compromise with the Sikhs. But he did nothing of the kind. He at once wrote to Ahmad Shah Abdali and invited his help.

Ahmad Shah was already on his way to India. Aqil Das's messengers met him at Rohtas. He hurried towards Jandiala. He found that the Sikhs had raised the siege and gone away towards Sarhind. The reason for their hurried withdrawal was this : they wanted that before meeting the invader theys hould take their families to a place beyond his reach. There was another reason also. The governor of Sarhind, Zain Khan had recently killed Sardar Dial Singh Brar. The

Sikhs wanted to avenge his death. They began to gather in villages close to Malerkotla. The chief of the place invited Zain Khan to help him. At the same time, he informed Ahmad Shah about the gathering of the Sikhs near Malerkotla.

From Jandiala Ahmad Shah had gone to Lahore. On getting the news of the Sikhs' gathering near Malerkotla, he started from Lahore on the 3rd of February, 1762. By making hurried marches, he reached the village of Kupp, near Malerkotla, by the morning of the 5th of February. About thirty thousand Sikhs were encamping there with their families and all their belongings. He had already sent instructions to Zain Khan that he should attack the Sikhs on the front. He himself was to fall upon them from the rear. He ordered his soldiers to kill all people found in Indian dress. In order to distinguish Zain Khan's Indian forces from those of the Sikhs, the former were told to wear green leaves in their turbans. Several thousand Sikhs were killed. Most of the killed were women and children.

The Sikhs had been taken by surprise. They at once held a council. They decided to die fighting. Of course, they could have saved themselves by surrendering and giving up their faith, but the thought never crossed their minds. They threw a cordon around their women and children, and began to move forward. They moved on, fighting. They fought while they moved on. Ahmad Shah wanted to have a pitched battle with the Sikhs. But they went on moving as they fought. They moved on fighting from village to village. The people of the places through which they passed gave

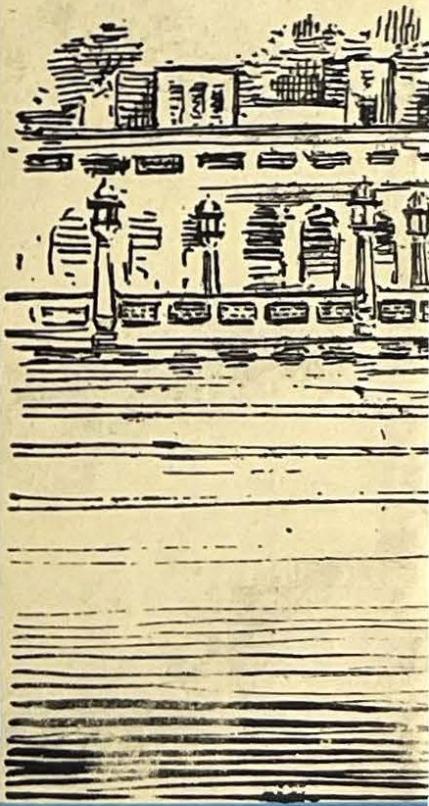
them no shelter. They feared the invader. On the contrary, they fell upon them and killed a large number. The Sikhs continued to move on. Their aim was to reach Barnala. They hoped that, at that place, they would get help from Baba Ala Singh. In case they got no help from him there, they were to pass on to the dry desert of Bhatinda.

But before they could reach Barnala, their cordon was broken by Ahmad Shah's soldiers. A wholesale massacre of the Sikhs followed. At least ten thousand Sikhs were killed in this action.

The wholesale destruction of the Sikhs occurred on the 5th of February 1762. It is called *Wadda Ghalughara* or the Great Holocaust. In all, over twenty thousand Sikhs men, women and children perished in this campaign of slaughter.

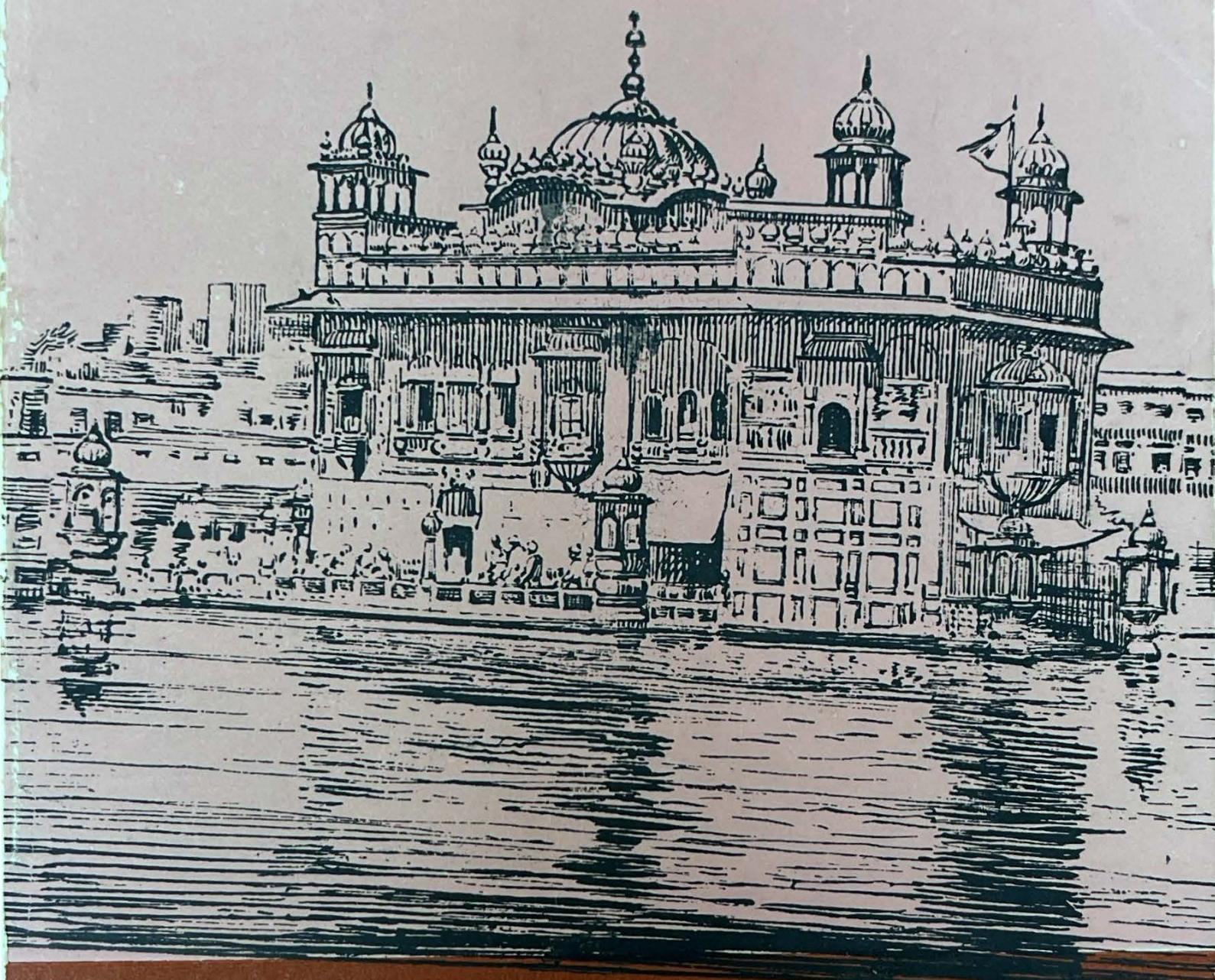
We should remember that these heroic Sikhs were massacred because they had tried to rid their country of cruel fanatic and despotic rulers. They were inspired with patriotic urges and emotions of the noblest type. They were freedom fighters in a most real sense. They were men of unshakeable faith, unbeatable courage, unbreakable will, and unmatchable capacity to do and suffer for their faith and ideals. They died heroic deaths in order to create conditions in which their countrymen could live with honour and self-respect. They achieved glorious martyrdom. They are remembered, and shall be ever remembered, with respect and admiration by students of history, as well as, of course, by all the followers of the Sikh Gurus. Let us bow our heads to these patriots and fighters for their and our country's freedom.

*Sat Sri Akal*



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from  
**SIKH HISTORY**

**BOOK-VII**



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## INTRODUCTION

In this book are told stories about Ranjit Singh, Maharaja of the Panjab. He did for India and Indians, in general, and for the Panjab and Panjabis in particular, something unique, unprecedented, most memorable, and permanently beneficial. He rescued his countrymen from centuries old subjection to fierce, fanatic, foreign rule. Thereby, he enabled his countrymen to hold their heads high, with just pride and self-respect. He established a secular and national state in which all communities were equal partners. He did something by virtue of which he endeared himself to all sections of the people, and came to be regarded by all Panjabis as their friend, liberator, and protector, as a God-sent guardian of their hearths and homes, and upholder of their honour, dignity, and self-respect.

From the status of a petty chieftain, he rose to the position of the most powerful Indian ruler of his time, whose kingdom extended from Kashmir in the north to Sindh in the south, and from Satluj in the east to Khaibar in the north-west. He was the first Indian who reversed the tide of repeated invasions from the north-west since the time of Anang Pal about seven hundred years earlier. He hurled back the invaders and raiders

to their mountain lairs. For centuries the Afghans and Pathans had become a terror to Indians, particularly to Panjabis who had to be the first victims of their raids and invasions. But Maharaja Ranjit Singh turned the tables on them, so that the Panjabis became a source of dread and terror to the erstwhile Afghans and Pathans.

With his secular and national ideals and policy, he united all Panjabis into a community of economic and political interests. He endeared himself to the people in general, irrespective of race, religion, and creed. He was acclaimed as the national leader of all Panjabis and the national monarch of the Panjab. He was able to persuade all Panjabis to sink and forget their centuries old hatreds and animosities, that had been fostered by false notions about religion, and to live in peace and amity, like good neighbours. He made all Panjabis feel the urge of Panjabi nationalism, and regard themselves as Panjabis first, and Hindus, Muslims, or Sikhs afterwards. As a result, his Sikh and Hindu troops subdued the Sikh and Hindu chieftains of the Panjab. His Muslim soldiers rejected the appeals of their Indian, Pathan, and Afghan co-religionists to crusade against the 'infidel', as they called the Maharaja of the Panjab. Instead of crusading against him, they helped him to liquidate the crusaders.

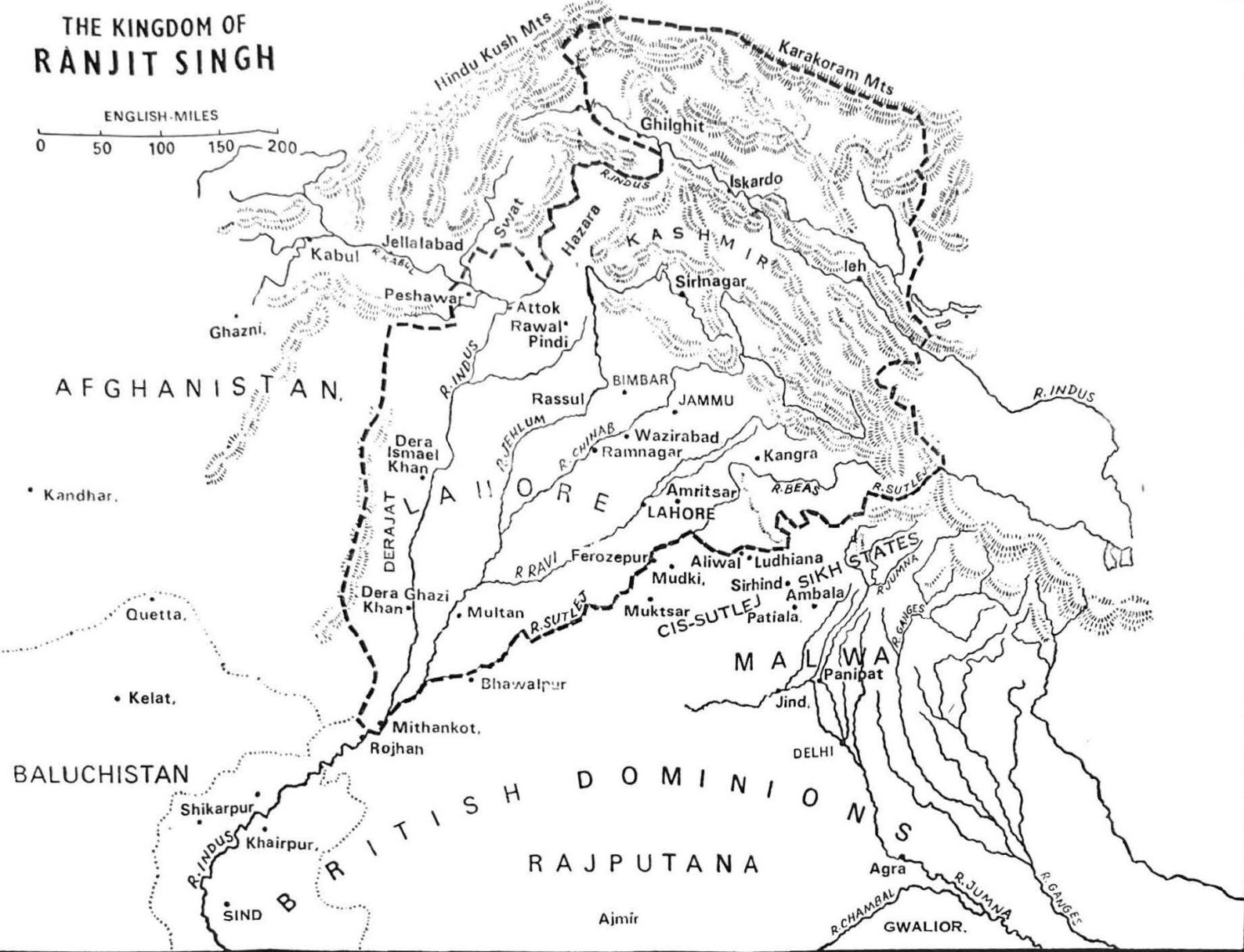
All Panjabis were happy and prosperous under him. When he died in 1839, there was universal mourning in the country. Everyone felt as if he had lost his own father and guardian. It was said that with his death, the Panjab had become a widow.

Such was the great one about whom you will read in this book. In order to appreciate adequately the full nature, importance, and significance of his works and achievements, we shall have to look back a little in history. We should know what had happened to his countrymen before his time, and what was happening to them when he took up his work. We should know what his heritage was, and then see what use he made of it in order to achieve his ideals and ambitions.

## THE KINGDOM OF RĀNJIT SINGH

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Maharaja Ranjit Singh

## MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

( 1 )

India had been subjected to foreign invasions from the earliest known times. The invaders came mainly from the north-west. They knew that India was rich. They also knew that it was disunited and weak; that its rulers were torn by mutual jealousies and enmities. Its people had no tinge or trace of nationalism, patriotism, or any concern for the common weal or woe. It was, therefore, easy to conquer, subdue, and plunder this rich, unlucky land. It was an alluring, precious, and easy prize. Drawn by India's riches and beauty, and encouraged by prospects of easy victory, invader after invader came, and went back laden with untold booty.

The Panjab was the first Indian province in the invaders' way. It was a sort of door-mat at India's gate. It was here that the invaders set foot first of all. Just imagine the sort and extent of havoc and destruction that a pack of hungry wolves will cause to the first flock of sheep that comes across their way. Something very similar happened to the Panjab and Panjabis. They suffered far more than any other at the invaders' hands. Its rich lands were laid waste. Its villages, towns, and cities were looted and burnt. Its inhabitants

were massacred most mercilessly. Its women were dishonoured, raped, and enslaved.

But the Panjabis went through all this hell and havoc of suffering as mute, helpless, impotent victims. They never thought of offering united opposition or resistance to the foreign invaders. They could not unite to face such common dangers. They had no leader to inspire and prepare them for such joint endeavour for common good.

( 2 )

As said above, the invaders had come mainly from the north-west. Since the beginning of the eleventh century, the invaders were all Muhammedans. Some of them came merely for plunder. They did here what the earlier invaders had done. But they did it all with greater brutalities and worse savage cruelties; for they considered themselves to be soldiers of Islam, whose religious duty it was to loot, dishonour, and massacre the 'infidels'. The rich lands of the Punjab were laid waste. Its villages, towns, and cities were looted and destroyed. Its inhabitants were massacred most mercilessly. Its women were dishonoured, raped, and enslaved. These Muhammedan invaders did something more not done, known, or suffered before. They carried away thousands of its men, women, and children to their own country. There they sold them as slaves.

Another set of these Muhammedan invaders came not merely as invaders, but as crusaders as well. Of course, they wanted to do what other invaders had

done. But they were sworn to do something more as well. They wanted to force their religion on the conquered people. They were determined to convert or kill the 'infidels'. These invaders founded kingdoms. They began to rule over the land in accordance with the law of Islam as understood by them or as interpreted to them by their *qazis* or theologians.

The Panjab, of course, was the first to be conquered by these invaders-cum-crusaders. It lay between two powerful Muhammedan capitals, Delhi and Kabul. The foreign Muhammedan government was most firmly and thoroughly established here. The Muhammedan invaders' conversion campaign had been more vigorous, ruthless, and successful in the Panjab than anywhere else. Consequently, by the end of the fifteenth century, which saw the advent of Guru Nanak Dev, more than half of the Panjab's population had been converted to Islam. The Panjab, therefore, contained the largest number of converts. These converts were even more aggressive and more bigoted than the foreign crusaders. They oppressed their Hindu neighbours out of their new-born zeal for their newly adopted religion. The Hindus tried all arts to please their Muhammedan rulers and neighbours. They imitated them in various ways. They adopted their language, dress, and way of life. Consequently, those who had escaped conversion had lost almost all that lends dignity and grace to the life of a Hindu.

The Panjabi Muhammedans had a dual loyalty—one towards their Panjabi neighbours, who were mostly

Hindus, and the other, towards their foreign co-religionists, who formed the ruling class. The latter loyalty was the stronger one. They felt to be closer to their foreign co-religionists than to their Hindu fellow-Panjabis. The Hindu and Muhammedan masses, of course, lived side by side in all parts of the Panjab. But they had no sense or feeling of mutual affinity or neighbourliness, no consciousness of their interests being common. There was constant friction between them in which the Muhammedans were the aggressors, and the Hindus were the victims of aggression.

( 3 )

Such was the state of things in the Panjab when Guru Nanak made his debut there towards the end of the fifteenth century. He preached a new philosophy, a new way of life. He sought to totally transform the people's outlook and attitude towards life, society, and the world. He exhorted them to realize that the God of the Muhammedans and the Hindus was one and the same God; that human beings were His children and, hence, members of one family. He tried to plant, in the hearts of the Muhammedans and Hindus, love and regard for each other, so that they could learn to live together in peace and amity. He said to them, 'True religion can never preach, teach or countenance hate and animosity between man and man. Let all Muslims be true Muslims. Let all Hindus be true Hindus. Let everyone of them act upon the basic principles of his religion. If all do so, they cannot hate or despise or persecute anybody. God is love. The path of hatred cannot lead to the Abode of Love.'

He wanted the people to realize that all who lived in the Panjab were one people, Panjabis; that they did not become aliens or enemies by a mere change of, or a difference in, religion. He wanted them to realize that their interests were common. He aroused in them a strong sentiment of Panjabi nationalism. By precept and example, he toiled all his life to unite the people into one brotherhood. He set the example by taking a low-caste Muhammedan as his constant companion. He visited the Hindus' temples and the Muslims' mosques. In his religious gatherings, men and women of all castes, creeds, and ranks sat together as members of one brotherhood, partaking of the food of the spirit being served there. He preached to them in their own language or mother-tongue. He made Panjabi the language of prayer. Till then, the Muhammedans had used only Arabic, and the Hindus had used Sanskrit alone, as their languages of prayer. He taught Panjabis to pray in Panjabi. This also engendered a feeling of oneness, of being Panjabis.

Again, in the community kitchens, run by Guru Nanak and his devotees, Hindus and Muslims, high castes and low-castes and social outcastes, touchables and untouchables, all sat together, to partake of the food for the body served there free and freely to all. This made them feel that they were one people.

In this way, they learnt a new lesson, that of co-existence, of unity amidst diversity. They came to realize that, though having different religious beliefs and rites, they were Panjabis all the same.

Thus Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, was also the founder of Panjabi nationalism. The sapling planted by him was watered, nourished, and shielded by his successors.

When Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Guru Nanak, decided to build the house of God—Hari Mandar—at Amritsar, he invited a prominent Muslim divine of Lahore, Hazrat Mian Mir, to lay its foundation stone. In the anthology of sacred writings—the Granth Sahib—compiled by him side by side with the compositions of the Sikh Gurus, he included the works of both Muhammedan and Hindu saints. This was a great step towards making the people realize their oneness and common destiny.

Guru Arjan Dev was marvellously successful in bringing the two communities together. Both Hindus and Muhammedans in large numbers accepted his faith. This enraged Emperor Jahangir, who did not like that Muhammedans be drawn away to another religion. He ordered that Guru Arjan be arrested and ‘killed with tortures.’ His orders were carried out most mercilessly as has been already told in Book II.

Guru Har Gobind, the sixth Guru Nanak, raised an army to protect the infant community and to set it on the path which was to lead to its ultimate destiny and destination. But he did not ignore or give up the secular legacy inherited by him. He continued to water, shield, and nourish the sapling of Panjabi nationalism, which Guru Nanak had planted in the Panjabis’ hearts. He recruited his soldiers without any distinction of

creed or community. He had a large number of Muhammedans among his trusted soldiers and friends. He built mosques for them. They enjoyed full freedom of worship and prayer. Thus they were practising the art of co-existence, of maintaining unity amidst diversity.

Guru Har Gobind had to fight three defensive battles against Mughal armies. His Muslim soldiers fought zealously against their co-religionists. That was a practical demonstration of their having imbibed the spirit of the Sikh Gurus' teachings.

When some time later, Jahangir, the murderer of Guru Har Gobind's father, offered him his hand of friendship, he accepted it quite readily. He did so because he would not miss any chance or opportunity of weeding out enmity and hatred, and fostering love and amity among all.

( 4 )

Acting most vigorously on Jahangir's religious policy, Aurangzeb ordered the execution of Guru Teg Bahadur. Guru Gobind Singh, Guru Teg Bahadur's son and successor, continued to follow his predecessors' policy of love and friendship for all and hate or enmity for none. He did not let the Sikh movement become anti-Islamic or anti-Muslim. He continued to lay emphasis on the brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God. He had a large number of Muslim admirers, followers, and friends. He had a large number of Muhammedan soldiers in his army. They never showed even the slightest hesitation in fighting his battles against their co-religionists. They came to his help in all crises, and never left him in the lurch.

He continued to act as the friend of man and all tyrants' foe. He continued to water, shield, and nourish the sapling of Panjabi nationalism planted in the Panjabis' heart by Guru Nanak. He toiled all his life to forge a united front against the fanatic foreign oppressors, and to make the land equally safe for the followers of all faiths and creeds.

Though he was called away before he could see his high aims duly accomplished, yet his labours were not lost. Though he did not actually break the chains which bound his nation, yet he had set his countrymen's soul free and filled their hearts with a lofty longing for freedom and ascendancy. He had destroyed the awe and terror, inspired by the Muslims' tyranny. He had shown that the Mughal armies could be opposed and defeated. He had taken up tiny sparrows and had taught them to hunt down the mighty imperial hawks. He taught his Sikhs to regard themselves as the chosen of the Lord. He assured them that they were destined to crush tyranny and oppression. He taught them to look upon themselves as the future rulers of their land. He assured them "*Raj Karega Khalsa, aaki rahi na koe.*"

The Sikhs had become a distinct and separate community. They had their own script, scripture, traditions, aspirations, and places of worship and gathering. Spurred on by their Guru's inspiring teachings and example, they continued to resist and fight the Mughal tyranny. They became the spearhead of a resistance movement against the fanatic foreign Mughals' tyrannical rule. For many years after the death of Guru

Gobind Singh, a strong storm of religious hate and intolerance blew across the Panjab. The two main communities of the Panjab were actually at daggers drawn at each other. Yet the spark of nationalism, that had been lit by Guru Nanak and fed and shaded by his successors, was not extinguished.

The armed struggle against the Muslims' tyranny, initiated and actively conducted by Guru Gobind Singh, was carried on by his followers. The first success won by Sikh arms occurred in 1709 A.D. With an army of untrained and ill-equipped Panjabi peasants, Baba Banda Singh Bahadur defeated the well-trained, well-equipped, and far stronger Mughal armies. He occupied a large portion of the eastern Panjab. He became the first Sikh ruler with his own capital, fort, and coin. He upheld and followed his Gurus' secular policy. All sections of the people got equal justice and protection. They felt that they were being ruled by sons of their own soil or land, and not by foreigners, as theretofore.

But his success was short lived. He was martyred in Delhi in 1716 A.D. Still, he virtually succeeded in destroying the Muslim ruling class. What is worth remembering is, that though he fought against the tyrannical Muslim rulers and was treated by them with ferocious cruelty, yet he entertained no hate against the Muslims as such. His last words, when his flesh was being torn with red-hot pincers, were—'God sent me to punish the corrupt and wicked people who had strayed away from the path of equity and were committing all kinds of excesses. Now that the said

task has been done. He has given power to men like my tormentors here to put an end to my life. I am being recalled by Him who sent me hither. All happens as He wills it to happen. I have no regrets. I bow to His will.'

( 6 )

The fall of Baba Banda Singh and the destruction of his army was followed by a period of ruthless repression of the Sikhs. The Mughal governors of the Panjab boasted that they would destroy and finish off the Sikhs. Thousands over thousands of them were murdered most mercilessly. Prices were fixed on their heads. The governor of the Panjab made massacre of the Sikhs a pastime. In the words of a Muslim writer, the governor 'filled the plain of the Panjab with blood as if it had been a dish'.

For a time, the Sikhs disappeared as a political force from the Panjab. They fled to the hills, jungles, and the sandy deserts of Rajputana. For eight years (from 1716 to 1724 A.D.), the Sikhs suffered silently. They took no active, effective step against their persecutors. But then they began to make their appearance again in the plains of the Panjab. They organised themselves in small bands and began, once more, to harass the government by their plundering expeditions and gorilla war-fare. They punished the traitors who had betrayed their brethren to the government. They also punished the petty tyrants who had, like mean cowards, vented their wrath on their unprotected women and children. They also

punished such corrupt officials and zamindars as oppressed the people. In particular, they fell upon and looted government parties carrying government treasure. They inflicted defeats on the Mughal armies sent against them from Lahore. Indeed, they made it very hot for the government of the Panjab and its supporters. It has to be remembered that all their activities were directed against the Mughal authorities. The people in general were not touched. They were even helped against their corrupt officials and powerful, troublesome neighbours. This made them popular with the people—Hindus as well as Muhammedans. The people began to look upon the Sikhs as brother-Panjabis, to whom they could look up for effective help in times of trouble and need.

This story of persecution, on the one side, and revenge, on the other, went on for some years. By then the government felt tired of this method of dealing with the Sikhs. It decided to try the method of conciliation or placation. They were given a handsome jagir and the title of 'Nawab' was conferred on their leader Kapur Singh. This was in 1733 A.D.

There was thus a sort of peace between the government and the Sikhs. The latter utilized this time for strengthening their organization. In 1734 they re-organized their forces into (i) the *Buddha Dal*, the Army of Elders, and (ii) the *Taruna Dal*, the Army of the Young. Both the Dals were supervised and kept together by Nawab Kapur Singh, who was highly respected, both as a secular and a spiritual leader. This reorganization helped them to carry on their struggle

against the cruel fanatic Mughal tyrants with greater effect and success. They organized fresh campaigns. They spread themselves into the Bari Doab and went up to Hansi and Hissar.

The government stopped the jagir. It began once more to persecute the Sikhs. The Temple of Amritsar was taken into possession. Moving columns were sent round to capture and kill the Sikhs. It was made criminal for anyone to give shelter to Sikhs or to help them in any way.

Thousands and thousands were killed in this way. There were also a number of cold-blooded executions so memorable that they entered the Sikhs' daily prayer. One such was the martyrdom of Bhai Mani Singh, the most learned and respected leader of the time. This occurred in 1738 A.D.

As a result of these renewed persecutions, most of the Sikhs again left the plains, and sought shelter in the Shivalik hills, the Lakhī jungle, and the sandy deserts of Rajputana. But, on occasions, they would come out of their hiding places and make their presence felt. One such occasion was Nadir Shah's invasion of India.

Nadir Shah invaded India in 1739. To reach Delhi he passed through the Panjab. He laid waste the whole countryside. He plundered Delhi. There he massacred in cold blood over one lakh men, women, and children. On his return journey he rounded up thousands of men and women, Hindus as well as Muslims. He meant to carry them off as slaves. The Sikhs came to know of this. They came out of their

hide-outs and fell upon the rear of Nadir's Army. They carried away a good part of the booty which he had got by plundering Delhi. They also released a large number of their countrymen from Nadir's captivity. Their conduct during Nadir Shah's invasion made them very popular with the Panjabi people. Even the Muslim peasantry of the Panjab began once again to look upon them as their friends and brother Panjabis. On reaching Lahore, Nadir Shah questioned the Governor, Zakriya Khan, about the 'mischief-makers' who had dared to attack his army's rear. He was told, 'They are a group of *fakirs* who visit their Guru's tank twice a year, and, bathing in it, disappear.' 'Where do they live?' asked Nadir Shah. 'There homes are their saddles', he was told. Thereupon, Nadir Shah said, 'Take care, the day is not distant when these rebels will take possession of your country.'

This remark of the foreign invader hinted at Zakriya Khan's incapacity to deal with the Sikhs. It cut him to the quick. He decided to launch an all-out campaign against them.

Fresh and stricter orders were issued to local officials to finish off the Sikhs. Prices were again fixed on their heads. Rewards were offered for their capture and destruction. The whole machinery of the government was put into motion to crush them. Even the non-official *zimindars* were made to lend a hand in this genocidal campaign.

This relentless, all out campaign against the Sikhs went on for about eight years. Most of the Sikhs again took shelter in the hills, jungles, and the sandy deserts of Rajputana. During this period occurred

the martyrdoms of some of the noblest, holiest, and most revered Sikh leaders, like Bhai Mehtab Singh, Bhai Taru Singh, Baba Bota Singh, Sardar Subeg Singh, and Sardar Shahbaz Singh. During this period occurred also the whole-sale massacre of the Sikhs in cold blood called the *Chhota Ghalughara*, the first or lesser holocaust. More than ten thousand Sikhs—men, women, and children—were killed.

All these executions and massacres set ablaze the fire of vengeance in the Sikhs' hearts. They longed for an opportunity to avenge the blood of the martyrs on their merciless persecutors, and to destroy and root out the oppressors of their race.

This opportunity was offered to them by the invasions of Ahmad Shah Durrani (or Abdali). The first of his nine invasions occurred in 1748. His invasions disorganized the administrative machinery of the Panjab. This gave the Sikhs a chance to come out of their hide-outs. It was during the period of these invasions that the Sikhs rose to power. Each time the Durrani came, they retreated into the jungles, hills and deserts. But as soon as he turned back homewards, they fell upon him and harassed and harried him all the way up to the Indus. They took away most of the loot he was carrying home. They also released the thousands of men and women whom he was carrying off as slaves. He did his worst to finish off the Sikhs. In what is called *Waddha Ghalughara* or the Great Holocaust, he killed ten to twelve thousand Sikh warriors and eighteen to twenty thousand Sikh women and children. But all this destruction failed to curb,

demoralize or suppress the Sikhs. They continued their struggles with still greater zeal and vigour.

This brave conduct of the Sikhs endeared them to the people. All sections of the people began, once more, to look upon them as their champions and protectors. Thus Ahmad Shah's invasions forced the Panjabis to sink their religious differences, and to regard themselves as Panjabis rather than as mere Hindus, Muslims, or Sikhs.

### ( 7 )

By organizing resistance against the Durrani invader, the Sikhs were able to seize power. In 1748 Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia was chosen the supreme commander of the Dal Khalsa. The Dal Khalsa was, at the same time, re-organized and declared to be a state. It was divided into eleven misals\* each with its own leader. All of them were to be under the over-all command of the supreme commander. The misals occupied more and more territory. Lahore was occupied in 1765. They divided most of the Panjab among themselves. They also developed a system called *Rakhi*. They undertook to defend the people in their respective zones on payment of protection tax called *Rakhi*. In due course the misaldars became petty barons, and their misals became their private armies.

Of the eleven misals four deserve notice. The most powerful were the Bhangis. They were in possession

\*There was also the twelfth misal called the Phulkia. But it was not a part of the *Dal Khalsa* and did not participate in their struggle against the Durrani or the Mughals. Its story is hence outside the scope of this book.

of Lahore, Amritsar, and most of the Western Panjab. The next in importance were the Kanhayas who held the Himalayan foothills. The Ahlualias were master of the land between the Ravi and the Beas. The Sukarchakias were among the lesser important misals. They were in possession of only the town of Gujranwala and the neighbouring villages.

The system of misals was a make-shift arrangement. It was suited to the challenge of the foreign invasions. But it did not provide a well organised or efficient administration of the Panjab as a whole. The Khalsa had, no doubt, become the paramount power in the Panjab. Yet it was far from being a consolidated power. The province was divided into as many as eleven independent states under Sikh rulers. The only bond of union among them was a common faith and common danger. They presented a solid front to the enemy. Otherwise they were quite independent of one another. They were, often, mutually at war. Their possessions were constantly changing. This state of things was not conducive to real peace and prosperity of the province. If the Panjab was to survive and prosper as a province, it was essential that it should be united and made strong. This could be done if one of the misals could subdue and absorb the others. The contest for supremacy was between the above said four misals.

So, the need of the time was a strong and wise misaldar who could subdue the other misals and absorb them into his own. Such a one appeared in the person of Ranjit Singh Sukarchakia. Of him we shall read in the following pages.

## II

### A VALIANT WOMAN-WARRIOR

( 1 )

Guru Gobind Singh brought about a wonderful revolution in the life, spirit, and outlook of his people. For centuries they had been held in subjection by autocratic alien rulers. He aroused the dormant energies of the vanquished people. He filled them with a living spirit, a lofty and zestful longing for social freedom and national supremacy. He fired them with courage and self-confidence, with aspirations to throw off the foreigners' yoke, to be masters of their own destinies, and rulers of their land.

With his Amrit or Baptismal Nectar, he turned frail bodied and feeble-hearted weaklings into strong-bodied and lion-hearted heroes and warriors. He turned, as he spiritedly declared, jackals into lions and tigers. He made tiny sparrows fight and vanquish mighty hawks. With a pat on the back and a deep look in the eyes, he could send out a fat, flabby, big-bellied sadhu, armed with only a wooden club, to challenge and break the skull of an experienced, well-armed, and mighty Pathan general. Indeed, a single 'Singh' (lion) of his

could, with dauntless courage and unshakable self-confidence, face and fight one and a quarter lakh adversaries to die fighting, but never to flee from the field. Such was the healthy wonderful change effected by Guru Gobind Singh in the bodies, hearts, and minds of his people.

This wonder-working process was not confined to menfolk alone. Guru Gobind Singh's Amrit of the two-edged sword wrought a similar revolution among the womenfolk as well. He raised women to a position of equality with men. This equality operated, not only in the social, religious, and political spheres, but on the battle-field as well. There are numerous examples of Sikh women's displaying what is commonly known as manly courage, strength, and bravery. In an earlier book we read of the heroic, manly deeds of Bibi Dip Kaur and Mai Bhago. Here we shall learn about another brave manly Sikh woman-warrior.

Her name was Sada Kaur. She was a matchless, valiant woman-warrior. She was, however, something more than that. She was also a wise and able administrator, endowed with admirable qualities of statesmanship. In war she could wield weapons and lead armies on the battle-field, and make plans for successful campaigns. She could also ably manage and wisely advise on all affairs of state in times of peace. She occupies a prominent position among the Sikh heroes. Nay, she is worthy to be counted among the topmost woman-heroes of India.

She played an important and effective role in battles fought for liberating our land from cruel, fanatic,

foreign rulers' grip, and in driving away invaders. With her active soldierly help in battle, she enabled Maharaja Ranjit Singh to drive out the Afghan rulers from the Panjab. With her wise advice and guidance, she helped him to bring about unity in the Panth and the Panjab. In that way, she helped him to establish Panjabis' joint rule in the land of five rivers. For her active and effective support in his early conquests, she has been called 'the ladder by which Ranjit Singh climbed in his early years'.

( 2 )

Sada Kaur was born in 1762, the year of the *Waddha Ghalughara* or the Great Holocaust. Her father was a famous, fearless warrior. From her early childhood she showed clear signs of being endowed with her warlike forefathers' spirit and powers of mind and body. Her parents were quick to notice these traits of her character and constitution. Her father said to her mother, 'Our Sada Kaur promises to be a Bibi Dip Kaur, a Mai Bhago. Let us give her good, suitable training. Let us help her to become a woman warrior.'

No sooner said than done. She began to be trained as a soldier. She turned out to be a wonderfully quick learner. In quite a short time, she mastered the soldierly arts of riding and wielding weapons of war. In hand-to-hand mock-contests with her fellow-trainees, she was always at the top. Nobody could make her acknowledge defeat. All who watched her engaged in these soldierly feats and exercises, used to remark, "There you see an Amazon in the making, a budding

valiant woman-warrior. She is sure to make history, to make a mark in the history of this land.'

In due course, Sada Kaur was married to Gurbakhsh Singh Kanhaya. He was the only son of Jai Singh Kanhaya. The latter was the most powerful misaldar at the time. Gurbakhsh Singh was about three years senior to Sada Kaur in age. He was well-built, tall, strong, brave and handsome. He was well versed in all skills and arts of war. He excelled specially in riding and swordsmanship. He was very popular with his soldiers. As his father had grown old and weak, Gurbakhsh Singh handled all affairs of the Kanhaya misal. In the event of any battle or conflict, he used to lead the misal's army.

( 3 )

In 1784, when Gurbakhsh Singh was about twenty five, the Kanhaya misal was attacked by the combined forces of Mahan Singh Sukarchakia, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, and Sansar Chand Katochia. Now, what was the cause of this attack ? Had the Kanhayas done anything to offend the three invaders ?

To answer these questions, we shall have to go back a little in history. As said already, in times of peace or when there was no common danger, the misaldars were prone to fight with one another. Each wanted to extend his territory and to acquire more wealth in form of booty.

The cause of Jassa Singh Ramgarhia's enmity with Jai Singh Kanhaya was this, In 1776 Jai Singh had, with

the help of the Bhangis, Ahluwalias, and Sukarchakias, attacked and defeated Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and taken possession of some of his territory. He had antagonized Sansar Chand Katochia by taking possession of the fort of Kangra.

Jai Singh had acted as a patron and helper of Mahan Singh Sukarchakia. The latter was a mere lad when his father, Charat Singh, had died. But in 1782, a quarrel occurred between the two, the patron and the protege. In 1781, the Kanhayas had helped raja Brij Lal of Jammu against the Bhangis. The raja had promised to pay to the Kanhayas thirty thousand rupees as yearly tribute. But later he refused to pay it. The Kanhayas decided to attack Jammu. They sought Mahan Singh's help. The latter reached Jammu before the Kanhayas could do so. The raja fled in terror. Mahan Singh plundered the rich city. Jai Singh wanted a share in the booty of Jammu. Mahan Singh refused to share it.

This, naturally, offended and incensed the old warrior. Mahan Singh was frightened. He hastened to Amritsar to tender his apologies to Jai Singh. But the latter refused to see him. He covered his face with his *chadar*, as he lay in his bed, and refused to exchange a word with Mahan Singh. Mahan Singh was on the point of being taken prisoner. But he got a timely warning and fled from Amritsar. Then he began to plan measures to take revenge upon his proud old patron. He found ready allies in Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and Sansar Chand Katochia. The three combined their forces and attacked the Kanhayas in 1784.

( 4 )

Gurbakhsh Singh led out his army to meet the combined attack. A fierce, bloody battle was fought at Achal Batala, near Gurdaspur. The fight was very unequal, indeed—three against one. Gurbakhsh Singh fought like a lion. He was ever in the thick of the fight, cheering, encouraging and guiding his soldiers. He wielded his sword most effectively, cutting down all who came in his way.

The unequal bloody fight raged on in great fury from early morn till mid-day. Neither side was prepared to yield or acknowledge defeat. Hundreds were killed and wounded on both sides. Still, the bloody, unequal fight raged in unabated fury. Then something happened which brought the battle to an abrupt end. A fast-flying arrow came hissing and struck Gurbakhsh Singh in the chest. He fell down and died instantly. His death caused deep grief even in the hearts of his attackers. The leaderless Kanhaya army left the field. The victors did not chase the vanquished.

This defeat and the death of his son broke Jai Singh's heart. He saw no alternative but to make peace with his enemies. He surrendered Kot Kangra to Sansar Chand. He restored the old possessions of Jassa Singh Ramgarhia. In order to win the goodwill of Mahan Singh, he did something which will be told in due course.

A Kanhaya soldier came galloping to convey the tragic, heart-breaking news to Sada Kaur. Naturally enough, the news stunned her. But she soon mastered

her grief. She checked her fast-flowing, silent tears. She regained composure and self-control. She got up and said to the messenger, 'Brother, lend me your horse.' He readily got down and handed over the reins to her. Springing on to its back, she spurred it, and galloped off.

Riding at full gallop, she soon came to the spot where her lord lay in a pool of his own blood. Some soldiers were sitting beside their dead leader. At her approach, they stood up and withdrew to a little distance. She was thus left alone with her darling, departed lord's lifeless body. Her composure and self-control were instantly gone. With a loud, piercing, heart-rending cry, she fell on his body, covered his face with kisses, and cried, 'Wake up dear Sardarji ! Open your eyes, my darling. See, your servant, Sada Kaur, has come. O dear, open your lips. Talk to me, though even for a little, little while. Recount to me your valiant deeds of today. Bid me farewell before you depart on your long journey to your true, permanent home. Speak. O dear, speak. Don't be sulky. Have compassion on me ! Give me some parting message, some sane, sagacious advice. What are your orders for me ? What shall I say to venerable Sardarji, our aged, ailing father ? He is eagerly awaiting news from the battle-field. Ah me, what news he will get ! It will break his heart. And your little 'Moonie, your Mehtab, orphaned in her infancy ! What shall I tell her ? How shall I console her ? How shall I quiet her when she cries and calls for her papa ? O my dear, why don't you speak ? You are driving me mad, lord of my body and soul.'

But there was no response, no reply. Who was there to make any ? Her lord had, hours ago, flown to the world to which all have to go, and from which none ever returns.

She woke to the reality. She controlled herself. She mastered her grief, which was to be her life-long companion. She dried her tears. She steeled her heart. She collected her thought. She resigned herself to the will of the All-powerful Giver and Taker of Life. She repeated to herself Guru Arjan Dev's sacred words.

'Whatever Thou doest, O Lord, Is all sweet to me.' Then, she got up and stood looking intently at her dead warrior's face. Then, closing her eyes, and folding her hands, she prayed to God to grant to the departed soul lasting peace, bliss and a seat at His feet. 'O Gracious Father !' she added, 'grant me the strength of heart and mind to accept Thy Will with patience and fortitude. Grant me the capacity and power to carry on my Sardarji's work. So enlighten me, O Giver of Light and Wisdom, that I may be able to carry on his work in the manner in which he himself would have done. Enable me, O Guru and God, to realize his abruptly broken dreams, so that, looking from above, he may feel pleased with me. Help me, O protector of the helpless, be ever with me in weal and woe !'

Then she knelt down beside her husband's body. Gently and carefully, she removed his armour. She then donned it herself with care. She took up his trusty sword stained with his enemies' blood. She

wiped it clean, put it in its sheath, and girded it herself. She applied a little of his clotted blood to her forehead. She then turned her *dopatta* into a light turban and tied it on her head. Thus dressed and armed like a male-warrior, she was now really an Amazon or female warrior in male attire. She had undergone a sea-change, a thorough transformation. She resolved to take up her dear departed husband's place as the leader of the Kanhaya misal. She was then only twenty-two years old.

### III

## RANJIT SINGH— BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

( 1 )

Most Muslim rulers and officials of those days had one ugly and lamentable failing. They were bigoted and cruel despots, given to base and debasing pastimes and pleasures. To oppress their non-Muslim subjects and neighbours was considered by them to be their right as rulers, and their duty as followers of the Prophet of Islam. Their treatment of the people, as a whole, was despotic, oppressive, and cruel.

Pir Muhammed Khan Chattha, head of the Chattha tribe living along the Jehlam, and chief of Rasulnagar, was no exception. Like other Muslim rulers, he was cruel and bigoted. He treated his subjects, specially the Hindus, with utmost cruelty. No woman's honour was safe in his territory. Life and property were equally unsafe under him. His agents and subordinates vied with one another in exhibiting their daring and power in maltreating the people.

Complaints against the Chatthas' excesses and atrocities reached Mahan Singh Sukarchakia. He was pained to hear these pity-exciting complaints. The

Sikh in him was filled, through and through, with righteous indignation. His ire was aroused to the utmost. He said to himself, 'As a Sikh of Guru Nanak-Guru Gobind Singh, it is my bounden duty to punish the wicked evil-doers, and to rescue the victims of the Chatthas' brutality.'

He consulted his friends and associates. They all concurred with him. They expressed their readiness to risk their lives in this noble adventure. Preparations for the campaign were begun at once. In due course he set off towards Rasulnagar with an army of six thousand horsemen. All of them were determined to win or die, but never to fly. Pir Muhammad Khan Chattha and his associates heard of Mahan Singh's coming attack. They turned out to be no better than cowards. They lacked the guts to come out in the field. They shut themselves in the fort. Mahan Singh besieged the fort and the city. After a few months' struggle, the fort and the city were conquered. They became Mahan Singh's possessions. The Chatthas were adequately punished.

Mahan Singh assured the people that he would treat them with justice and kindness. 'We are all Panjabis', he said, 'You will soon see the welcome difference between the rule of the deposed foreigners and that of the incoming fellow-Panjabis'. His proclamation was greeted with joyous shouts of Sat Sri Akal and welcome.

Soon thereafter, Mahan Singh conquered Alipur, another stronghold of the cruel, hated Chatthas. There, too, he was welcomed as a deliverer. In fact,

this campaign brought him much popularity, honour, and fame.

Rasulnagar was renamed Ram Nagar and Alipur was renamed Akal Garh.

After his victories against the Chatthas, Mahan Singh started homewards. Soon a despatch-rider arrived from Gujranwala. Jumping down from his horse, he bowed and said to Mahan Singh, 'Millions of congratulations, Sukarchakia Sardarji ! God has blessed you with a son. He has been named Budh Singh, after your great ancestor.'

On hearing the good news, Mahan Singh called a halt. Joyous cries of Sat Sri Akal were raised by the whole victorious army. Mahan Singh thanked God and said, 'The two boons—a great victory and a son—have been granted to me at the same time. The new born comes as a bringer of victory. He shall be called Ranjit Singh—Victor of Battles. I am sure more victories will come to me. He, too, will be a great victor. He will win many battles.'

( 2 )

So Ranjit Singh, Victor of Battles, was born in Gujranwala on November 2, 1780. He was the only son of Mahan Singh Sukarchakia. His mother's name was Raj Kaur. During his early childhood he had a virulent attack of small-pox. He survived the attack; but it deprived him of his left eye and deeply pitted his otherwise handsome face. He was thus somewhat disfigured. No one, not even the wildest day-dreamer, could have then dreamt that this frail, disfigured child was destined to be a great man ; that he

would, one day, become master of the Panjab and of the Panjabis' hearts; that he would inspire terror in the hearts of those terrible people who had been so often invading, plundering, and laying waste this rich and beautiful land of five rivers; that he would be universally acclaimed as the Lion of the Panjab.

Mahan Singh made due arrangements for his only son's education and training. He knew quite well the nature of the task which the child would have to undertake in the years to come. He wanted to prepare him for that task. A learned, pious Sikh, named Bhai Bhag Singh, was chosen to be his teacher. He was to teach him Gurmukhi, to impart him instructions in the principles of the Sikh faith, and to acquaint him with the history of the Panjab and the Sikhs. The teacher did his task very well, indeed. As a result of his instructions, Ranjit Singh developed deep and abiding reverence for the Sikh Gurus and their teachings. He acquired the habit of beginning his day with prayers before Guru Granth Sahib and hearing recitations therefrom. He was imbued with the spirit of Panjabi nationalism, which had been founded by Guru Nanak, fostered by his nine successors, and exemplified in life by the great Sikh heroes. Even at that early age, he began to cherish a longing to be a friend and helper of Panjabis, to toil, and even die, if need be for the Panjab.

His military training was entrusted to a capable Sikh scholar-soldier, named Pandit Amir Singh. He trained him in the art of using weapons of offence and defence, particularly in wielding the sword. He would usually take him out into the neighbouring jungle and

engage him in riding and hunting. As much of his time was spent in chase, he learned to ride and shoot well. He became an excellent horseman and unmatchable swordsman. In fact, later on, he came to be probably the best rider and swordsman of his time in India. Even at that early age he became a tireless rider. He could remain the whole day in the saddle, without showing any signs of fatigue. He exhibited this quality many a time in later life. Indeed, he needed it and used it quite often. For example, when he heard of General Hari Singh Nalwa's death in action at Peshawar, he hastened to that place on horse back. He rode in one day from Lahore to Jehlam, a distance of over one hundred and sixty kilometres.

His excellence as a swordsman was also exhibited by him a number of times. For example, when he met the British Governor General, Bentinck, at Ropar in 1831, he personally competed with the best of the English horsemen in tent-pegging and swordsmanship. None could equal him. All acknowledged his superiority. He exhibited also a rare feat of his skill as a swordsman. A trooper of his held a lemon on his outstretched palm. Ranjit Singh came riding at full gallop, and, cut with his sword, the lemon without injuring the trooper. No one else was able to perform this feat.

He had to make use of his skill many a time on the battle-field. With a swift stroke of his sword, he would sever the head of his adversary and make it roll in dust. All this was a result of the excellent training that he received in his early days.

## THE BLOOD IN HIS VEINS

( 1 )

From his very early life Ranjit Singh had an insatiable hunger for information and knowledge. He asked all sorts of questions from his teachers and others whom he met.

One day he said to his teacher, Bhai Bhag Singh, 'You have told me much about our Gurus, their teachings, their activities, and so on. You have given me a good deal of inspiring information about the great Sikh martyrs and the sublime manner in which they bore unheard of, unbearable tortures, and resolutely refused to give up their faith. I have learnt much about the great heroes of our race, like Baba Banda Singh Bahadur, Nawab Kapur Singh, and Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. But I have yet to hear about my own immediate ancestors, whose blood runs in my veins. Do please enlighten me about them. Will you, dear Bhaiji ?'

*Bhai Bhag Singh* : 'Most readily and gladly, my dear. I am delighted to hear what you have said. Well, listen. As, of course, you know, your family is called

the Sukarchakia family, and your father is now the head of the Sukarchakia Misal...'.

*Ranjit Singh* : 'Why are we called Sukarchakias ? How did we acquire that name ? We live in Gujranwala and should be called Gujranwalias, I deem.'

*Bhai Bhag Singh* : 'I shall tell you that presently. Your ancestors were humble peasants living in villages around Gujranwala. One of those villages was named Sukarchak. How your family came to be named after that village will be told later.'

'Well, as I said, your ancestors were humble peasants. They were sturdy, strong, and industrious workers. They earned a mearge living as farmers and raisers of cattle. The first in your family to win prominence was one named Sardar Budh Singh...'

*Ranjit Singh* : 'How ? What did he do to achieve prominence ?'

*Bhag Singh* : 'I shall tell you that presently. Sardar Budh Singh was your father's grandfather, that is, your great grandfather. He had the honour and privilege of having been baptized by Guru Gobind Singh himself...'

*Ranjit Singh* : 'How lucky he was ! What would not I give to drink the Amrit from the tenth Master's own hands ! But go on.'

*Bhag Singh* : 'He heard from the Guru's own lips what qualities of mind and heart his saint-soldiers, the

Khalsa, should possess ; how they should live and act as friends of man and all tyrants' foes.'

*Ranjit Singh* : 'That means that he explained the Khalsa Rehat or rules of conduct for his Khalsa. You have told me so well and so often what the Rules are. But O to have heard them from the Guru's own lips ! But please go on.'

*Bhag Singh* : 'Well, Sardar Budh Singh did follow the Rehat prescribed by Guru Gobind Singh. He was a deeply religious man, possessing lofty qualities of head and heart. He was also a strong, brave, and fearless warrior. He fought with his face ever towards his foes. He never showed his back to his enemies. He had on his body as many as forty scars of sabre, lance, and musket wounds.'

*Ranjit Singh* : 'Grand indeed ! What a glorious record ! I would emulate him.'

*Bhag Singh* : 'Please don't interrupt. Let me complete the story.'

*Ranjit Singh* : 'All right. I shall keep my lips sealed, my ears open and my mind alert. Go on, I am all ears.'

*Bhag Singh* : 'Sardar Budh Singh had a strong, swift-limbed, and beautiful piebald mare named Desan. It became as well-known as its rider. Their feats of endurance became the talk of the people far and near. They travelled the plains of the Panjab and swam its broad rivers in flood as many as fifty times.

Being inseparable, they—the mare and its master—came to be known jointly as Desan Budh Singh. Sardar Budh Singh died in 1718, two years after Baba Banda Singh's martyrdom. It is believed that he took a worthy part in some of Baba Banda Singh's battles. He left his sons a few villages which they could call their own, and many others in the neighbourhood which paid them protection tax or Rakhi.

*Ranjit Singh* : 'Let this suffice for today. I have heard a good deal on which I would ponder before hearing more.'

*Bhag Singh* : 'All right, as you like.'

( 2 )

The following day the teacher and his knowledge-hungry pupil met again. The former continued his story of Ranjit Singh's ancestors as under :

'As I said, one of the villages inhabited by your ancestors was Sukarchak, Sardar Budh Singh's son, Sardar Naudh Singh, fortified that village. He engaged a body of Sikh horsemen to help him in his adventures. Together they came to be called the Sukarchakias. They formed the Sukarchakia Misal. With this small band of warriors, Sardar Naudh Singh performed such noble and daring deeds that he came to be known and respected throughout the land, from the river Satluj to Rawalpindi. The Sukarchakias joined forces with other misals and fought several engagements with Ahmad Shah Abdali. Sardar Naudh Singh was able to win the regard and approbation of

Nawab Kapur Singh, under whom he fought against the invader. As the Abdali retreated, the Sukarchakias took possession of parts of the land lying between the Ravi and the Jehlam. Sardar Naudh Singh was killed in 1752, while fighting against the Afghans near Majitha, near Amritsar.

*Ranjit Singh* : 'When I grow up, I shall avenge his death. I shall wreak vengeance on these damned foreigners.'

*Bhag Singh* : 'That is a mighty good resolve ! May God grant you the strength to act up to it ! You will be rendering a great and memorable service to your country and countrymen. But let me go on with my story.

'To resume the story, your grandfather, Sardar Charat Singh, was the eldest of Sardar Naudh Singh's four sons. He became the head of the Sukarchakia family. He added to the number of his horsemen and, thereby, added to his strength. He made it a rule that all who would join his misal, must first get baptised.

*Ranjit Singh* : 'A good rule, no doubt. I, too, shall adopt it.'

*Bhag Singh* : 'That will be fine, indeed, and proper. Sardar Chet Singh then moved his headquarters from the village Sukarchak to Gujranwala. He erected battlements round the town. At that time he heard that the Imperial Faujdar of Eminabad was very cruel and fanatic ; that he mercilessly oppressed and maltreated the people, particularly the Sikhs and Hindus. Sardar Charat Singh decided to punish the wicked evildoer, and to rescue his victims. With a body of one

hundred and fifty of his select horsemen, he raided Eminabad. He besieged the Faujdar's palace. He killed the cruel official in a hand-to-hand fight.'

*Ranjit Singh* : 'I am proud of his noble undertaking and his great soldierly feat. Well, go on !'

*Bhag Singh* : 'Your grandfather plundered the Faujdar's treasury and the imperial arsenal. He acquired large funds and hundreds of good horses. This adventure won him much fame and popularity.'

'The Afghan Governor of Lahore heard of all these doings of Sardar Charat Singh. He came with a force to apprehend the brave Sukarchakia Sardar. But he was compelled by your grandfather to fly back to the capital. He left behind him his guns and stores of grain, to be appropriated by your sire, of course.'

*Ranjit Singh* : 'So my grandfather killed two birds with one stone. He routed the attacker and got ample rewards therefor. He got victory and wealth.'

*Bhag Singh* : 'Yes. But let me finish. Emboldened by this success, Sardar Charat Singh extended his domains by capturing the towns of Wazirabad, Ahmedabad, and Rohtas. Soon thereafter, Ahmad Shah Abdali once again came down from Afghanistan. Sardar Charat Singh adopted the usual tactics employed by the Sikhs in those days. He retreated to the jungles. Ahmad Shah plundered his estates. He also got Gujranwala's fortifications razed to the ground. Soon, however, Sardar Charat Singh more than settled his account with the Afghans. He chased them on their return journey and plundered their baggage. He

also freed a large number of women and girls who were being carried away as slaves. He rebuilt the battlements round Gujranwala and reoccupied the neighbouring country. He rehabilitated those who had been plundered and uprooted by the Afghans.

‘Sardar Charat Singh’s last action was at Jammu. He went there to help the rightful claimant to the *gaddi* (throne) of Jammu. There he fell mortally wounded by the bursting of his own matchlock or gun. That was in 1782.’

*Ranjit Singh* : ‘That was, indeed, a very sad end of that mighty hero.’

*Bhag Singh* : ‘True, but God’s ways are strange and inscrutable. We have to bow before His Will. So did your father. But we shall talk about him tomorrow, if you please.’

*Ranjit Singh* : ‘All right. I have heard much today.’

( 3 )

On the following day, Bhai Bhag Singh continued his recital as under :

‘Well, dear, your father was only ten when your grandfather breathed his last. He inherited his father’s daring and ambition. He married a daughter of Sardar Gajpat Singh, Chief of Jind. Thereby he strengthened his own position among the misaldars. He built a fort within the walled town of Gujranwala. He named it “Garihi Mahan Singh”. He increased the number of his horsemen to six thousand.

Thus strengthened, he resumed the ancestral occupation of capturing territory and extending his domain.

'Soon complaints began to reach your father against the Afghan Governor of Rasulnagar, Pir Muhammad Khan. The latter was cruel, haughty, and bigoted. He oppressed and maltreated his subjects most mercilessly. Your father responded to the appeals of the oppressed people. He fell upon Rasulnagar and conquered it without much difficulty. He renamed it Ramnagar. Then he conquered Alipur, which was another stronghold of the haughty and much hated Chatthas. He renamed it Akal Garh.'

'Now I come to a most important event in your family's history. Do you know, can you guess, what it was? No. I shall tell you. It was your birth. You were born when your father had gone westwards to chastise the Chatthas. You were named Budh Singh. A despatch rider was sent post-haste to inform your father. He was just returning from his victories against the Chatthas, when the despatch rider met him. Of course, not only your father, but also all his companions were filled with joy. Your father was told that you had been named Budh Singh. He said, "The boy is a bringer of victories. He shall be called Ranjit Singh—Lion Victor of Battles. He will win many victories and great renown."

'That is how you got your name, my dear Lion Victor of Battles!'

*Ranjit Singh* : 'God permitting, I shall justify my father's choice of my name. I shall try to act in

a manner as to prove his prophetic words to be true to the letter.'

*Bhag Singh* : 'After taking and renaming the Chattha strongholds of Rasulnagar and Alipur, your father took Pindi Bhattian, Sahiwal, Isakhel and Sialkot. Then he proceeded to Jammu. He had an old score to settle with its Hindu Dogra ruler. The latter fled from the city. With the loot of Jammu, your father raised the Sukarchakias from a position of comparative obscurity to that of being one of the leading misals.

'This angered Sardar Jai Singh Kanhaya. The Kanhayas were then the most powerful of the misals. Your father had to fight them. In one of the many battles between them and us, Sardar Jai Singh's son, Sardar Gurbakhsh Singh, was killed. The Kanhaya Chief's pride was humbled. At the suggestion of Sardarni Sada Kaur, Sardar Gurbakhsh Singh's widow, he agreed to betroth his grand-daughter to you, our precious dear Lion Victor of Battles ! Two powerful misals have been united thereby. The union is sure to produce good results.

'This brings the story of your brave illustrious ancestors to the present day. You now know as much as you need to know about those noble ones whose blood runs in your veins.'

*Ranjit Singh* : 'You have told the story well. I am grateful for it. I am sure God will permit me to follow their example. I have many ideas and dreams about what I would do. May God be my guide and helper !'

*Bhag Singh* : 'I join you in that prayer. May He permit me to witness your glorious achievements !'

## BOLD ADVENTURES OF A LAD

( 1 )

In 1791 Mahan Singh called up Sahib Singh Bhangi of Gujrat to pay the tribute due from him. On his refusal to comply, Mahan Singh decided to proceed to Gujrat for the purpose of realizing the tribute. Ranjit Singh, who was then a little over ten years of age, heard of his father's decision. He made up his mind to accompany his father in that campaign. So determined, he met and said to his father, 'Dear father, I should like very much to go with you on this military campaign. Do please allow me to do so. I am eager to see and learn how such campaigns are conducted. I must get used to the demands that such campaigns make on one's body, mind and heart. I want so to equip myself that I may be fit to be helpful to you. I long to get initiated in the art of war as early as possible. Shall I go with you?'

Mahan Singh said in reply, 'I like your idea, my Lion Victor of Battles. I agree with you that it is time for you to get experienced in military campaigns. Who knows how soon you may be suddenly called upon to step into my shoes. It is best to get prepared in time for all eventualities. You will go with me. Get ready. Choose the horse that you will ride. Select a band of

best horsemen who will attend upon you as your body-guard.'

Ranjit Singh was beside himself with joy. He thanked his father and said, 'When do we start ?'

Mahan Singh, 'As you know, an *akhandpath*, continuous reading of Guru Granth Sahib, has been started this morning. On its completion, we shall offer prayers to the Giver of all victories for success of our campaign. We shall start the next day, which is Wednesday.'

Mahan Singh started towards Gujrat as planned. Ranjit Singh accompanied him, riding his favourite horse, and followed by his bodyguard. He was going to have his first experience of a military campaign. Little did he know that he was accompanying his father not only for the first but also for the last time.

Sahib Singh Bhangi could not stand Mahan Singh's mighty force. He left Gujrat and took refuge in the fort of Sodhran. At the same time, he sent an urgent appeal to his kinsmen at Lahore. He appealed to them to come to his help against the Sukarchakias.

Mahan Singh besieged the fort. The siege dragged on through the winter months. Now, as ill luck would have it, Mahan Singh was suddenly taken very ill. He had a severe attack of dysentery. The attack was so severe that he feared that he might not recover. Hence he formally invested Ranjit Singh as the head of the Sukarchakia misal. He did this by daubing the boy's forehead with saffron paste. Then

he exhorted his followers to obey their young chief and be ever faithful to him. Bidding farewell to his son and followers, Mahan Singh returned to Gujranwala, for rest and treatment.

The Bhangi Sardars of Lahore soon learnt of Mahan Singh's illness and return from the siege. They also learnt that the Sukarchakias were in a precarious predicament. They were under the command of a lad of ten or eleven. They felt confident that 'the lad of ten', as they called Ranjit Singh, would not be able to withstand them. They boastfully declared, 'We shall despatch the lad or bring him to Lahore, bound hand and foot. We shall crush and finish off the Sukarchakias and be masters of their lands.'

They hurried to the relief of Sodhran. Ranjit Singh soon learnt that a Bhangi force from Lahore was on its way to the besieged fort. Though a lad of less than eleven, he acted like a seasoned general. He went out to waylay and meet that force. Ambushing in the jungle near Kot Maharaja, he waited for the Bhangis from Lahore. They were to pass that way. As they approached, Ranjit Singh fell upon them suddenly. They were taken completely by surprise. They were soon routed and put to flight. They left behind a large number of guns and cannon, besides a good deal of other war-materials. All this fell into Ranjit Singh's hands. He sent all this to Gujranwala.

Needless to say that Mahan Singh was immensely pleased to see the guns, cannon, and other war-materials captured by his son. He was glad to hear that his 'Lion Victor of Battles' had proved a victor

in the very first battle that he had fought. This, he thought, augured well for the future.

But on the following day, Mahan Singh breathed his last. The sad event occurred in March 1792. Ranjit Singh heard the sad, heart-breaking news while at Kot Maharaja. Weighed down with sorrow, he hurried to Gujranwala. He was just able to get back in time for his father's funeral.

( 2 )

Ranjit Singh was a lad of less than eleven when his father died. He was too young to bother about the day-to-day management of his estate. That work was left to his father's manager, Lakhpur Rai. His mother, Raj Kaur, and his mother-in-law to be, Sada Kaur, jointly supervised and guided Lakhpur Rai in managing the affairs of the Sukarchakias' estate.

Ranjit Singh spent much of his time in chase. Engaged in that pastime, he had ample practice in riding and shooting. Thus he learnt to ride and shoot well. In these years he also developed a love for horses. This love, in later life, turned into a master passion.

As already said, his favourite pastime was hunting. One day, while hunting in the thick forest near Ramnagar, he rode off alone in pursuit of game. On that account, he got separated from his companions. He, a lad hardly yet in his teens, was thus all alone in that dense forest.

It so happened that a Chattha chief named Hashmat Khan, was also hunting in the same forest.

Now, this Chattha chief had suffered many humiliating defeats at the hands of Ranjit Singh's father. His estate had been taken possession of by that Sukarchakia Sardar. He met with Ranjit Singh in that jungle. He decided to take revenge. He was confident that he would kill that 'lad of thirteen'. So determined, he fell upon Ranjit Singh. He made a sharp, sudden cut with his sword. Just when he did so, Ranjit Singh's horse took fright and reared. Thereby Hashmat Khan's first move failed. Before he could make a second move, Ranjit Singh pierced and transfixes him with his lance. He then cut off Hashmat Khan's head, impaled it on his spear, and rode back to his companions with that gory trophy.

His companions hailed him with joyous shouts of Sat Sri Akal, praised his power and daring, congratulated him on his wonderful bold achievement, but gently protested against his having risked his life in that manner. They ended by saying, 'In future we shall never leave you thus alone. If that villain had succeeded, what would have been our fate ? How would it have gone with our misal, what answer could we have made to the two venerable Sardarnis' rebukes and questions ?'

( 3 )

Ranjit Singh spent another two years hunting wild pig and deer in the dense jungle around Gujranwala. He took no interest in his estate. His mother became anxious for his future. She felt that marriage might bring him round to the responsibilities of life. She conferred with Sada Kaur. The two ladies fixed a date

for his marriage. He was just over fifteen when he left Gujranwala for Batala, the chief town of the Kanhayas, to wed Sada Kaur's daughter, Mchtab Kaur. This alliance between the two important Sikh families was a major event for the Panjab. All the leading Sikh chiefs were present at the wedding, which took place in 1796 A.D.

## TOWARDS A FREE AND POWERFUL PANJAB

( 1 )

### DANGERS

In the 1790s the condition of the Panjab was far from happy and secure. A greater part of it was ruled by the Sikh misals. The misaldars were generally at daggers drawn with one another. The misal organization was, in fact, no longer the united fraternity that it used to be some fifty years before. When Ahmad Shah Abdali had begun his invasions of India, the Sikh misals had fought as one under Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. But now they were woefully disunited. This disunity of the Sikhs rendered the Panjab weak and vulnerable. An invader from the north-west could have easily defeated the misals, one by one, and made the Panjab a part of his empire. If the Panjab was to be made free and powerful, this problem of disunity of the Sikhs had to be solved before it became too late.

Ranjit Singh was shrewd enough to realize the gravity and urgency of this problem. He was alive to the dangers to which this state of things exposed his

dear Panjab, the land of the Sikh Gurus and of the innumerable Sikh martyrs. It was clear to him that the misals must need be brought together under one strong and capable person. He felt that, God willing, he could be the needed one. He decided to work towards achieving that goal.

But there was also another menace to the Panjab. There were some aliens, non-Panjabis, in the very heart of the Panjab, who wanted to take advantage of this disunity. There was the ruling Pathan family of Kasur. These Pathans had not become Panjabis at heart. Their loyalties were more to the land of their ancestors than to the Panjab. The rise of the Sikh misals had filled them with fears about their own safety. They felt that the rising Sikh power was a mortal menace to them. Each time that Ahmad Shah Abdali or his son, Taimur, had invaded India, the Pathans of Kasur had joined him in plundering their own neighbours. They wished, therefore, that the Afghans should invade the Panjab and make it a part of their empire. Their Chief, Nizamuddin Khan, hoped that by helping the invaders, he could secure *Subedari* (Governorship) of Lahore.

So, a still bigger menace to a free and powerful Panjab were the Afghans. Ever since the conquests of Ahmad Shah Abdali, the Afghans had looked upon northern India as a part of their empire. Abdali's attempts to treat and use it as a part of his empire had been largely foiled and frustrated by the Sikhs. His son and successor, Taimur, had kept up pretensions to northern India. But the best that he could do was to retain his hold on Kashmir and turn out the Bhangis from Multan. Taimur's son, Shah

Zaman, was full of inordinate ambition. As soon as he succeeded his father, he announced his intention of re-establishing the Afghan empire in India. Among the first to offer him all assistance and full cooperation was Nizamuddin of Kasur.

( 2 )

## TO FIGHT OR FLY ?

Shah Zaman soon proved as good as his word. He invaded India in 1793. In this first invasion he came as far as Hassan Abdal and then went back. In 1795 he came again. This time he re-took Hassan Abdal and captured Rohtas from the Sukarchakias. Ranjit Singh was thus the first Sikh Chief to suffer at Shah Zaman's hands.

The invader had, however, to hasten home in order to save his own country from an invasion from the west. As soon as he turned his back, Ranjit Singh expelled the Afghans from Rohtas.

Shah Zaman had not abandoned his ambitious intention. He came for the third time in November, 1796. He intended, as before, to proceed to Delhi. He had a well-equipped army of over thirty thousand Afghans. He expected that a large number of Indians would join him. Among them was to be Nizamuddin of Kasur, who had been promised *Subedari* of Lahore. Shah Zaman also expected that Sahib Singh of Patiala would help him, in keeping with his family's tradition of loyalty to the Durranis.

As the news of Shah Zaman's invasion spread, people began to flee to the hills for safety. Most of the misaldars were among the first to decamp. By

December, 1796, Shah Zaman had occupied the Panjab as far as the Jehlam. He was, of course, heading for Lahore. The territories of two Sikh Chiefs, namely Sahib Singh Bhangi at Gujrat and Ranjit Singh Sukarchakia, lay across the invader's route to Lahore. The former made an attempt to halt the invaders. But the odds against him were too heavy. The invaders were too many and too strongly armed for him and his horsemen. He had to give up the attempt and fly eastwards.

Ranjit Singh's turn was to come next. He could raise, at the most, five thousand undisciplined horsemen, armed with only musket and spears. The Afghans, on the other hand were over thirty thousand strong. They were equipped with heavy artillery and swivelguns mounted on camels. Evidently, the odds were too heavy against Ranjit Singh and his ill-equipped five thousand horsemen. Under the circumstances, he felt it would be suicidal for him to meet the invaders, all by himself.

He saw it clearly that if the Afghans were to be checked, the Sikhs had to unite and face the invaders as one force. Otherwise, they would be annihilated piecemeal, one by one. So, concerted action was necessary. In order to come to a joint decision, Ranjit Singh decided to call a meeting of all the Sikh Chiefs or *Sarbat Khalsa* at Amritsar. That was the traditional Sikh way of meeting a common danger. So determined, he collected his family, and proceeded to Amritsar.

In compliance with the summons of the *Sarbat Khalsa*, many Sikh Chiefs assembled at Amritsar,

The matter was discussed and debated upon. Most of the chiefs were in favour of abandoning the plains and going into the hills for the time being. It was added, 'Let us advise and assist the people to do the same. No doubt, the Afghans will plunder our cities and towns. Let them. We shall settle accounts with them later. We shall harass them continually with our traditional hit-and-run tactics. We shall thus make it too hot for them. They shall be forced to go back. We can follow them in order to see them off in our traditional way.'

The elderly Sahib Singh Bhangi was the chief spokesman for this point of view. He had had an experience of the military might of the invaders. He pleaded that it would be impossible for them to fight and defeat the Afghans in pitched battles, Guerilla tactics, he added, would be more effective. Most of those present agreed with him.

( 3 )

### SADA KAUR'S BOLD STAND

The celebrated woman-warrior, Sada Kaur, was present in that meeting of the *Sarbat Khalsa*. She was there as the Chief of the Kanhaya misal. She was strongly opposed to this point of view. She had given vent to her feelings by uttering words of protests, now and then. When she saw that most of the Sikh Chiefs were inclined to show the white feather, she was deeply hurt and bitterly sad. She went up to her son-in-law, Ranjit Singh, and said to him, 'Do you see which way the wind blows here? It is a matter of shame for us all to run away in this cowardly manner.'

Remember the great heroes of our race. Their souls as well as the souls of our immediate heroic ancestors must be feeling sad and humiliated at our cowardice being manifested here. Let us not sully their names. Let us fight the invaders with all our might and wisdom, leaving the outcome in the hands of the Almighty. We should trust in Him and do the right. I want you not to fly but to stay behind and fight. I shall be with you. What have you to say to this, my Lion Victor of Battles ? I hope you will not forget what blood runs in your veins. Speak up, dear !'

Sada Kaur's words went straight to the brave young heart of Ranjit Singh, and stirred it to its utmost depths. He stood up and thus addressed the assembly, 'Brave Khalsa warriors, let us not be overcome by fear and despair. This brave respected lady by my side has shown me the right way, the right way for all of us. It is, no doubt, hard and beset with dangers, very great dangers. But what dangers can make Guru Gobind Singh's Khalsa swerve from the path of honour and glory ? Let us not forget what lessons he taught us, and what spirit he infused in us. When creating the Khalsa, he declared that a single Sikh of his would boldly and fearlessly face and fight one and a quarter lakh and never show his back to the enemy. He declared that he would make humble little sparrows chase and pluck mighty hawks. Shall we prove unworthy of the Guru's trust ? Shall we run away from the invaders, without giving them a taste of our steel ? The tenth Master will turn his back on us, if we do so. Don't forget what treatment our brave ancestors, not long ago, gave to this invader's father and grandfather. Let us follow their example, come

what may. I for one, weak and ill-equipped though I be, shall stay and fight, unmindful of the consequences. I, too, was wavering and slipping like most of you here, but this brave respected lady has saved and propped me. I thank her. All of you should thank her. She has saved me from going wrong. She wants to save you all from behaving in a manner unworthy of you. Wake up, Khalsaji. Let us unitedly face the invaders. The wonderful Lord's is the Khalsa, and His the victory shall be.'

Sada Kaur's and Ranjit Singh's stand turned the majority in their favour. They all agreed to back up Ranjit Singh. They chose him the commander of the Khalsa forces. They all, including some grey-headed veterans of many battles, agreed to follow and obey this bold young man, who was hardly sixteen years of age, at that time.

So Ranjit Singh took command of the combined Sikh forces. At their head, he advanced towards Lahore. It had been occupied by Shah Zaman on January 1, 1797. The advancing Sikh forces drove the Afghans and their Indian supporters out of the countryside. They, later, took shelter in the city. Every night the Sikhs would attack some quarter of the city. After killing a number of Afghans, they would disappear into the darkness. The Afghans dared not come out and pursue the Sikhs. In fact, they were ever full of fear and alarm, and longed to go back home. Shah Zaman was disillusioned and in despair. He began to look for a face-saving excuse for giving up the campaign and going back to his country.

That excuse he got at the end of January 1797. He heard that his brother, Mahmud, was organizing a rebellion in Afghanistan. He started homewards at once. He left General Shahanchi Khan with twelve thousand soldiers in Lahore. The Sikhs followed the retreating Shah all the way across the Jehlam, and relieved him of much of his baggage.

As the Sikhs were returning after having seen off Shah Zaman and his Afghans, Shahanchi Khan decided to take them by surprise and deal them a crushing blow. He fell upon them suddenly near Ramnagar. But he was speedily and completely defeated by the Khalsa forces led by Ranjit Singh.

Till then Ranjit Singh had been an obscure Sikh chieftain. But in that winter he came to be known as the hero of the Panjab.

( 4 )

### SADA KAUR ROARS AGAIN

Shah Zaman heard of his general Shahanchi Khan's defeat at Ramnagar. He felt humiliated. This sense of humiliation aroused his anger. He vowed vengeance against the Sikhs. As soon as he had settled his domestic problem, he once more started towards India. This was his fourth invasion. It occurred in the autumn of 1798.

As the news of the invasion spread, the people of the Panjab, mostly Hindus and Sikhs, began to leave their homes and seek safety in far off places. Most of them fled to the mountains. Indeed, there was panic in the whole Panjab. By October, 1798, all the big

cities of the Panjab were deserted. The Sikhs' sacred city of Amritsar was no exception. Even the sacred shrine there was left with only a handful of guards to protect it. Sahib Singh Bhangi evacuated Gujrat. The Afghans plundered the town and massacred its inhabitants. As the Hindus and Sikhs had left the city earlier, the victims were all Panjabi Muslims. The latter had hoped that the invaders, being their co-religionists, would do them no harm. Likewise Gujranwala was evacuated by Ranjit Singh. The town and its inhabitants, mostly Muslims, met the same fate.

Again a meeting of the *Sarbat Khalsa* was called at Amritsar to decide what course of action should be adopted. Again, the majority of those present were for flying to the hills. They felt that the odds against them were too heavy, for regular pitched battles. They again advocated employment of their traditional hit-and-run tactics in order to harass and tire out the Afghans.

Again it was Sada Kaur, the lion-hearted woman-warrior, who spiritedly opposed the majority's talk of 'too heavy odds and the traditional hit-and-run tactics'. She said, 'Khalsaji, you are again for adopting a course of action most unworthy of you. All these specious arguments are mere excuses. They are dictated by cowardice which has gripped your hearts. They are intended to camouflage your chicken-heartedness and lack of honour. As Guru Gobind Singh's Khalsa, it behoves you to dare and bear all dangers, and challenges, boldly and fearlessly, unmindful of what the outcome might be. To fly would be the height of timidity and lack of confidence in the Guru, God, and yourselves. Moreover, honour bids you to stay and

fight the invaders. You have been taking protection tax or rakhi from the people. You are honour-bound to protect them. To run away, leaving the people to the invaders' mercies, would be most dishonourable for you, my dear Khalsaji.

'If all of you decide to show the white feather and run away, I will not join or follow you. I will stay to brave all dangers. I am sure that a large number of the Guru's Sikhs will be ready to join me. I will lead them against the foreign invaders. Guru Gobind Singh's *Amrit* impels me to follow that course. I appeal to you, in the name of Guru Gobind Singh, in the name of our glorious heroes and martyrs and in the name of your brave ancestors to shake off all fear and weakness. Let us face and defeat the invaders. The Guru and God will be with us !'

At this Ranjit Singh stood up and said, 'I completely concur with the lion-hearted Kanhaya Sardarni ! She has been a source of inspiration to me. She has instilled in me her own indomitable spirit. I feel proud of being related to her. I appeal to you all not to dis-honour the Khalsa's name. I appeal to you all to realize your duty towards this sacred city and the sacred shrine here. Shall we leave this Holy of Holies to the tender mercies of the merciless, fanatic, foreign invaders ? Shall we forget what this invader's grandfather did to our sacred places here ? And shall we give this Afghan a free chance to repeat Ahmed Shah's performance ? Shall we run away from our duty ? Take courage, Khalsaji. Remember how we hesitated, how we doubted our God-given powers two years ago. Then think of what our united action could achieve. What we could do then, we shall do now, too.'

'I, for one, will stay and, with the help of such of my brethren as agree to cast their lots with me, fight the invaders, and protect the sacred city and shrine to my last breath.'

At this stage, Ranjit Singh's uncle, Dal Singh, stood up and said, 'Believe me, dear Khalsaji, the Afghans are not so good and formidable soldiers as they are taken to be. I say this from a little bit of experience. An armed Afghan caravan was carrying loads of fruit for Shah Zaman. I came to know of this. I made up my mind to have that fruit for myself. With only a handful of my brave companions, I fell upon the caravan, scattered them and took away the fruit as well as a lot of other useful materials. Shake off all fear. We can fight, affright and put to flight the foreign invaders. The Guru and God will help us.'

This decided the Sardars and their friends. 'We stay and fight,' said they. 'Victory is the gift of God. Let us make a united effort to oppose and drive away the haughty Afghans.'

Ranjit Singh was again chosen to be the leader. He was just eighteen years of age at that time.

( 5 )

### SHAH ZAMAN IN A FIX

Shah Zaman entered Lahore on November 27, 1798. Soon thereafter, he sent a strong detachment of select Afghan soldiers to attack Amritsar. Ranjit Singh was ready to receive them. He came eight kilometres out of the city to meet them. A severe battle ensued. It lasted over three hours. The Afghans were routed. They

fled to Lahore. Ranjit Singh pursued the flying foreigners to the very gates of that city. Then he encircled the capital. He cut off the Afghans' supply-lines. He burnt the crops in the countryside around Lahore. The Afghans began to suffer for want of supplies.

The situation became very serious for them. They felt that unless they drove away the Sikhs, they would face want and starvation. So, they were forced to take the offensive. A stronger and bigger detachment of select Afghan soldiers under Nizamuddin of Kasur, was sent against the Sikhs. They attacked the latter at Shahdara on the other side of the Ravi near Lahore. The Sikhs proved too strong for the Afghans. They repulsed and routed the invaders. The Afghans suffered a heavy slaughter.

Another detachment of Afghans came from Lahore to help Nizamuddin. But by the time they could reach, the Sikhs had disappeared. The Afghans wreaked vengeance for their defeat by attacking and plundering the local population which was entirely Muslim. The Sikhs had not molested them in any way whatsoever. But the foreign co-religionists of theirs did not show any sympathy or tenderness for them, their Panjabi co-religionists. Thus the Panjabi Muslims learnt a much-needed lesson. They realised that their co-Punjabi Sikh brethren were better worthy of their loyalty than their foreign co-religionists. This realization was a valuable step towards the making of a free, united and powerful Panjab.

The Afghans were in great terror. They dared not move out of the city to face the Sikhs in an open battlefield. This made Ranjit Singh more daring. One day,

accompanied by a small band of horsemen, he rode up to the Samman Burj of the Lahore fort. Shah Zaman was holding court there. Ranjit Singh fired a number of shots which killed some Afghans waiting upon the Shah. Then he shouted out, at the top of his voice, 'O grandson of Ahmad Shah, Charat Singh's grandson has come. Come out, and measure swords with him.'

Shah Zaman heard the challenging shouts; but he dared not move. No Afghan had the courage to go out and meet Ranjit Singh and his small band of horsemen. After waiting for a short time, Ranjit Singh galloped away, shouting, 'Akal ! Akal !'

Shah Zaman was in a terrible fix. He had come with the intention of proceeding to Delhi. But he found himself confined in Lahore. It seemed impossible to pierce through the Sikh barricade and move on towards Delhi. He taunted his Afghan soldiers. He exhausted his eloquence in exhorting them to go out and boldly face and finish off the 'infidels'. But so great was the terror that Ranjit Singh and his companions had created in the Afghans' minds, that they merely shook their heads and refused to stir from their barracks.

( 6 )

### SHAH ZAMAN'S DIPLOMACY

It was not long before Shah Zaman came to the disheartening, dismal conclusion that it was impossible for him to exterminate the Sikhs. His *jehad* or holy war against the 'infidels' was proving a failure. He decided to give up fighting against them. He decided to use diplomacy. Where the sword had failed, clever diplomacy might succeed. He concluded that if he could divide the Sikhs,

break up their unity, he would be able, one day, to liquidate them, one by one. He thought, 'If they could be persuaded to regard me as their overlord or emperor, even in name, I can count them among those subservient to me. I can then say that their estates are a part of my empire.'

So thinking, he sent his agents to Amritsar. They assured the Sikh Sardars that Shah Zaman had formed a very good opinion about them; that he had a great regard for them. 'He has decided', added they, 'to give up fighting against you. He wants to make friends with you. He says that he will not disturb your possessions. Keep what you have acquired. Give up fighting. Make peace. He wants to proceed to Delhi. He cannot do that so long as you are arrayed and up against him. So give up fighting. Tell us what you want. He will grant it, in order to win your goodwill and friendship.'

The Sikhs at once replied, 'We want nothing that the Shah can give us. All we want him to do is to return to his own country and leave us in peace in our own. Go and tell him that.'

The Shah's agents returned to Lahore. They informed him of their failure to rope in the Sikhs. But he was determined not to give up efforts at diplomacy. He said to his agents, 'Let us try another trick. Go and try to sow discord among the Sikh Sardars. Go to them, one by one. Make generous offers to every one of them, and hint that others are accepting the offers. With soft, sweet and clever words, persuade them to agree to my proposal. Ask them to send their agents to me in order to acquaint me with what they

want. Assure them, at the same time, that they will be given what they want. If we succeed in dividing these troublesome infidels, we can rule over them thereafter.

This trick of his was more successful. Many Sardars were taken in. They sent their agents to Lahore. They were received with flattering attention and talked to in soft, honeyed words. Shah Zaman met each of them separately and said, 'Tell your master that I bestow on him the territory that he owns. He need pay me no tribute. Let him keep the land and use it as he likes. I shall not disturb him. I attach no conditions to this offer. He should not hesitate to accept it.'

So great was the Shah's success that even Ranjit Singh was persuaded to send his representative to the Shah. He was instructed to negotiate with him for the *Subedari* (Governorship) of Lahore.

The Afghan diplomacy was thus successful in breaking up the Sikh unity. Each Sardar was eager to acquire from the Afghan invader as much as possible. So the Shah's policy of 'divide and rule' was going to succeed.

The hour, they say, produces the man to tackle it. Just when the Shah was exulting over his diplomatic success, a saviour appeared in the person of Baba Sahib Singh Bedi. He was an elderly man of great learning and piety. He was also a brave and dauntless warrior. Moreover, he was a descendant of Guru Nanak. Because of all this, he was highly respected by all Sikhs. He enjoyed the status of 'father of the Sikhs'. He was deeply pained to see this discord among the Sikh Sardars. He felt that it would be ruinous for them, as

well as for the whole Sikh community. He pleaded with the Sardars to stop all negotiations with the foreign invader. He exhorted them to bear in mind what havoc Shah Zaman's father and grandfather had caused in the country, to their community, to their sacred places and to their ancestors. He concluded by saying, 'It will be a matter of lasting shame for us to beg for gifts and favours from the Afghans. Our ancestors spurned the offers made by the foreign invaders. They refused to accept Subedari of Lahore, when it was offered to them by Shah Zaman's grandfather, Ahmad Shah Abdali. Let us beware of the foreigner's tricks. Let us not be duped by him any further.'

The Sikh Sardars agreed to be guided by Baba Sahib Singh Bedi. They said, 'You are authorized to speak on our behalf. Give to the Shah's agents whatever reply you like and think proper. We shall stand by what you say'.

Shah Zaman's agents came again to continue and conclude the negotiations. Every Sardar told them to meet and talk to Baba Sahib Singh Bedi, 'He will speak for us,' they said, 'We will accept what he agrees to accept.' The agents met the grand old man, stated their mission and urged him to advise the Sikhs to accept the Shah's generous offer.'

He replied, 'We took the country with the sword and with the sword shall we keep it. We need no gifts or grants from your master. The Khalsa will rule in their own right. Tell your master to clear off and leave us in peace. Or let him come out into the field and taste a bit more of our steel.'

The Shah was sorely disappointed at the failure of his diplomatic move. He gave up his plan to win over the Sikhs. He yelled out, 'So, they don't want peace. They want war. They shall have it. I shall soon teach them such a lesson in war as they will never forget. They will rue the day when they rejected my generous offer.'

But it was an empty boast, as we find from a news writer's report of the same day. It says, 'The Shah's camp is always in alarm on account of the Sikhs, who at night approach Lahore and keep a fire of musketry. None dares to go out against them.'

Shah Zaman now heard that his brother, Mahmud, was again stirring up trouble in Afghanistan. The news offered a good, face-saving excuse to the Shah for returning home. Before leaving, he proclaimed that, after settling matters with Mahmud, he would return, give the promised unforgettable lesson to the Sikhs, and conquer not the Panjab alone but the whole of India.

When the news of the Shah's departure reached Amritsar, the Sikh Sardars broke camp and hurried to their estates. But Ranjit Singh did something different. Instead of hurrying to his estate, he immediately set out in pursuit of the retreating invader. He caught up with the Afghan army's rear not far from Gujranwala. From there to the banks of the Jehlam, he kept up a running fight. He took a heavy toll of the invaders' life and equipment. This pursuit led him to the banks of the Indus.

All this made Ranjit Singh popular not only in the Panjab, but throughout India. He came to be regarded

as the protector of the Sikh nation and saviour of the Panjab. It was 'generally believed that were it not for the fortitude and excellent conduct of Ranjit Singh, the whole of the Panjab would have become a desert waste.'

Before leaving, Shah Zaman had threatened to come again as an invader and conqueror of India. He could not carry out that threat. He was deposed and blinded by his brother. In fact, his last invasion was the last invasion of India from the north-west. Thus the Panjab was cleared of the Afghans for ever. This was a very important step towards the making of a free and powerful Panjab.

AMBITIOUS,  
CHARMING DREAMS

In due course, Ranjit Singh returned home, after having 'seen off' the invader Shah Zaman beyond the Indus. His mother and mother-in-law were waiting for him with pardonable pride and affectionate eagerness. As he came in, each moved round his head a bag full of gold mohars, kissed him on the forehead, and called to her attendant, 'Take this bag, go out, and distribute its content among the poor. Our Jewel, our Victor of Battles, has come home after winning name, fame and glory. Tell them all to pray for him. Let all pray that his star may rise higher and brighter, day by day.'

Thanks giving services were held in gurdwaras, temples and mosques. Gifts and food were given to the poor at large.

One day, Sada Kaur called him for confidential talk and said, 'My dear Ranjit, Lion Victor of Battles, I have been indulging in charming dreams and making ambitious plans about you and the Panjab. As you see, the misals are ever quarrelling among themselves,

In this way they weaken one another. We are thus a house divided against itself. Shah Zaman has been driven out, no doubt. But before leaving, he threatened to come again with a stronger force. We, too, should make ourselves stronger, lest he should prove too strong. Moreover, the misaldars' mutual quarrels cause intense suffering to the people. This sad and saddening state of things must end, it must be ended.'

*Ranjit Singh*—I agree with you fully and whole heartedly. But what should be done and by whom?

*Sada Kaur*—The first thing to be done is to unite the mutually hostile and warring misals under one leadership. By the way, we may leave out the Phulkias. They have, all along, held aloof and have even collaborated against the Khalsa Dal. If our misals get united, no foreigner dare attack us or win against us. Shah Zaman was taught the lesson of his life by our forces fighting under you, their matchless leader. We can likewise do the same to all our future foes from across the frontiers. Then we can, and shall, turn our attention to aliens holding parts of our Panjab and liquidate them, swiftly and completely.'

*Ranjit Singh*—Fine dreams they are, to be sure. The idea is good, grand, and noble. The scheme is splendid and charming. But how to achieve all this? How can the mutually jealous and ever-warring misaldars be persuaded to unite under one leadership? Will they agree to sacrifice their individual powers and independence at the altar of unity? And who is to be the leader?

*Sada Kaur*—Who but you, my dear Lion Victor of Battles ? They chose you to lead the combined Khalsa forces against the Durrani. And you amply justified their choice, and proved your worthiness. That should make them inclined to entrust you with more powers, in peace as well as in war. I say with confidence that a high, very high destiny awaits you. Heights of glory and greatness are beckoning you. Gird up your loins and get ready.

*Ranjit Singh*—Your dreams are charming, no doubt, but they are, all the same, mere dreams, wild, rather too wild, dreams. In your eagerness for me, you are forgetting the stern realities before us. Will the misaldars give up their identities, and hand over all their powers and possessions to me ? I am very much in doubt about that. They will not readily accept me as their leader.

*Sada Kaur*—They did so on two recent occasions. They made you their leader to command their united forces against Shah Zaman. They agreed to be led and commanded by you. And you acquitted yourself most splendidly. They must do that again for the sake of the good of the community and the country.

*Ranjit Singh*—Surely they will do so, if Shah Zaman turns up again.

*Sada Kaur*—No, they shall do that much earlier and for good. They shall accept you as their leader, in peace and war, in order to make our community united and strong, and to make our Panjab free and powerful.

We shall appeal to them. Those who choose to ignore our appeal, shall have to taste and bow before our steel. They should be assured that by agreeing to our proposals, they would not be losers but gainers in the long run. We shall not liquidate the misaldars or their families. Their misals will go, no doubt, but they themselves will be well provided for.

*Ranjit Singh*—That is quite good and wise. They will act on the adage that says, 'If we feel that the whole is going to be lost, we should, of our own accord, part with half of it.'

*Sada Kaur*—Let us hope that they will realize that in time, and for their own sake, too. I have my plans for you and for our Panjab. I plan to make you the master of a great and liberated Panjab. I would see you become a maharaja, the Maharaja of the Panjab, whose name, fame and glory will live and shine in history, whose friendship and favour will be eagerly sought by rulers far and near.

*Ranjit Singh*—Splendid, very splendid dreams ! But go on.

*Sada Kaur*—I am serious. I am not dreaming but disclosing my plans. I want you to be the creator of a united, free, powerful, and prosperous Panjab. Let us plan, strive and achieve, heart within and God overhead. Victory and glory shall wait on our banners. We shall give peace, happiness and prosperity to the people. We shall show them how much better it is to be ruled by Panjabis in the Panjab than by foreigners. Isn't it a grand ideal, a noble task ?

*Ranjit Singh*—‘Yes, but perhaps too high to be achieved. I eagerly yearn to make my motherland forever free from foreign freebooters’ invasions. They come too often and too freely. They go about unchecked. They behave like wild beasts let loose on a flock of sheep. They spread panic and misery all round. They plunder and destroy our villages, towns and cities. They massacre the people. They carry away women and girls as their slaves. These Ghaznavis, Durranis, and their ilk must be made to give up doing such brutal and wicked deeds. They must be taught a bitter, unforgettable lesson. They have been visiting us too often. I should like to pay some return visits to their land in due time.

*Sada Kaur*—‘That is well thought and well put. Be sure you will do all that and more.’

*Ranjit Singh*—‘All the same, all this seems to be no better than a wild dream. In my ambitious and uncontrolled enthusiasm I start building castles in the air. I am getting too prone to day-dreaming.

*Sada Kaur*—‘There is nothing wrong or unworthy in building castles in the air. All castles are first built in the air. Only afterwards they are built on the earth. We have to begin with building castles in the air, and then end with castles on the earth. What is wrong and undesirable is to begin and end with castles in the air alone. We should and shall guard against that failing. Sure and complete success will be ours. Let us ever trust in God and do the right. All the same, we should not be proud, boastful, or overbearing. Let us

ever remember that sweetness and humility form the essence of all virtues and good qualities.'

*Ranjit Singh*—'I shall ever try to keep my behaviour modest and my projects high. May He be my guide and helper at all times and in all places !'

*Sada Kaur*—'Amin ! May He accept your prayer !'

## LAHORE LIBERATED

( 1 )

## CITIZENS' DECISION

Lahore had been liberated from the Afghans by the Sikhs in 1765. Three Bhangi Sardars—Lehna Singh, Gujjar Singh, and Sobha Singh—had captured it and divided it among themselves. At the time of Shah Zaman's last invasion, the city was in the possession of the above-said Sardars' sons, namely, Chet Singh, Sahib Singh and Mohar Singh. They paid little heed to the administration of the city or the welfare of its people. They were given to loose and luxurious living. Very often, they indulged in mutual quarrels. They used, quite often, to raid and plunder one another's parts of the city. These quarrels and raids of theirs brought much misery to the people in every part of the city. Sikhs, Hindus, and Muslims, all suffered alike. 'The people of Lahore', says a contemporary writer, 'being extremely oppressed, raised their voices of wailing to the skies.'

The three Sardars' mutual hostility and quarrels made them weak and vulnerable. We have already heard of Nizamuddin Khan of Kasur. He had been casting

greedy, longing eyes on Lahore. On being promised *Subedari* of Lahore by Shah Zaman, he had joined his own forces with those of that foreign invader. He had fought against the Sikhs. But his plan had mis-carried. Shah Zaman had to go away without having achieved anything. Nizammudin was very sad and much disappointed. He had to be. All his dreams had been shattered, completely and too soon.

Now, when he heard of the state of affairs in Lahore, he decided to employ a trick in order to take the city. A majority of Lahore's population consisted of Muslims. He planned to arouse and fan the religious and communal sentiments of the Lahore Muslims and to persuade them to help him in taking the city. He sent his agents to the leading Muslims of Lahore. These agents appealed to them in the name of Islam and the Prophet. They said, 'He is a Muslim, he is your brother-in-faith. If you help him to acquire Lahore, you will rid yourselves of the *Kafirs*' (infidels') rule. You will help establish Islamic rule here. Invite him to come and take your city. Promise and render all help to your co-religionist, your brother-in-faith.'

But the Lahore Muslims refused to be taken in. They knew a great deal about Nizammudin's and his Pathan kinsmen's treatment of his subjects and neighbours. They knew that he and his tribesmen were as hard and cruel to the Muslims as to the non-Muslims. So they refused to oblige his agents. The latter had to go away to report to their master, the failure of their mission.

Soon after the departure of Nizammudin's agents, the leaders of the Lahore Muslims called a meeting of

prominent Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. There the chief leader of the Lahore Muslims described Nizammudin's clever move and said, 'It is true that he is a Muslim. But he is not to our taste. To be shoe-beaten by a Muslim is, in no way, more bearable or less abominable than being treated the same way by a non-Muslim. Moreover, whatever our ills and grievances—and they are real, hard, and many—we are much better off than those whose destinies he sways. I dare say that if that Pathan were to become our ruler, for us it would be like being flung from the frying pan into the blazing fire. So, we firmly and determinedly refused to countenance his agents.'

'But I fear that we have not yet heard the last of Nizammudin and his Pathan tribesmen. He knows a good deal of our three Sardars' mutual quarrels and animosities. He might decide to take advantage of their disunity and consequent weakness. He might attack and take the city by force. We must not let that happen. We have to decide what we should do to fore-stall him, to defeat his plans.'

'Please go on,' said a number of his listeners. 'You seem to have thought over the matter. Let us know your views.'

'Well', resumed the Muslim leader, 'in my view, we should get rid of our present oppressors, but we should also guard against our passing under another oppressor. In this matter of our common concern and interest, we should put aside all considerations of creed and caste, I have a proposal to make. But I hesitate to tell it. Some of my friends here might not like it.'

'Do please tell us', said a number of his listeners.  
 'We shall consider and discuss it purely on its merits.'

'Thank you', said the Muslim leader. 'I should like to add that I have discussed my plan with a number of friends—Sikhs, Hindus, and Musalmans. They have liked and approved it. Here it is. We all have heard very favourable reports about Sardar Ranjit Singh Sukarchakia. He is a good and kind ruler. If he were to agree to become our ruler, we should be very lucky indeed. I propose that we should send him a secret invitation, requesting him to come and occupy Lahore, and promising him our help and loyalty.'

All present—Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus—with one voice, approved the proposal. All agreed to appeal to Ranjit Singh to come to their rescue and deliverance.

( 2 )

### CITIZENS' JUBILATIONS

In accordance with the unanimous decision made in the meeting of the Lahore citizens, a letter was addressed to Ranjit Singh. It was signed by the topmost leader of each community. It was sent to him through special, trustworthy messengers. It was speedily delivered to him.

By nature, Ranjit Singh was cautious and sagacious in such matters. He was averse to acting in haste, without fully weighing the pros and cons. Therefore, before committing himself on this matter, or embarking on any action concerning it, he thought it prudent to make sure that the invitation was genuine. For

aught he knew, it might be some mischief-mongers' clever device to involve him in a conflict with the Bhangi Sardars.

Accordingly, he deputed a trusted servant of his, Abdur Rahman, to go with the citizens' envoys, study the state of affairs in the city, and advise him what to do. Abdur Rahman went to Lahore. He held talks with the leading Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh citizens of the city. Having studied the situation to his satisfaction, he returned to his master.

After despatching Abdur Rahman to study the situation at Lahore, Ranjit Singh had gone to consult with Sada Kaur at Batala. Abdur Rahman met him there and submitted his report. He assured Ranjit Singh that the invitation was genuine, that it expressed the true feelings of the Lahore citizens. 'Moreover', added he, 'of the three Lahore Sardars, only one, Sahib Singh, could have offered some effective resistance. He is away from the city. The other two are altogether incapable of offering any such resistance as may cause us any worry or difficulty.'

Ranjit Singh sought Sada Kaur's advice. She was much delighted. 'She said, So our dreams are on their way to realization ! You will be master of the Panjab's capital. Who controls the capital controls the country. Soon you will become master of the Panjab. We should accept the invitation and take immediate action. By helping them we shall be helping ourselves.'

Preparations were made for the attack. When all was ready, Sada Kaur said to her son-in-law, 'We shall

tell our soldiers not to do any harm whatsoever to the people or their property. Victorious armies, as you of course know, are wont to reward themselves by plundering the conquered city. In the process they inflict much suffering and shed much innocent blood. Our soldiers should do nothing of that sort. They should remember that we and they are going to Lahore not to conquer but to deliver. We are not to behave as enemies and conquerors but as friends and deliverers. We ourselves will give them ample rewards.'

Ranjit Singh was of the same view. He concurred with his mother-in-law, readily and wholeheartedly. Strict instructions were accordingly given to all the soldiers who were to take part in the coming campaign.

With an army of twenty-five thousand select soldiers, Ranjit Singh started towards Lahore on June 26, 1799. It was the worst part of the year for a military campaign in that part of the Panjab. The summer's heat was intense and scorching. The monsoons might break at any moment and convert the Panjab plains into a vast marsh. Perhaps, Ranjit Singh chose this time for the expedition for that very reason. He was sure that the Lahore Sardars had no thought that any attack could or would be made on their city in that hot scorching season. They would be caught napping, taken unawares and ill-prepared for offering any resistance.

Marching at leisure, Ranjit Singh's army reached near Lahore in the evening. During the night the entire city was encircled. By sunrise everyone of the twenty-five thousand soldiers was in his place and every

gun was in its position. Sada Kaur chose to attack the Delhi Gate. Ranjit Singh went to the Anarkali. There he was given a secret message of welcome from the citizens of Lahore. He rode round the city walls. He got it mined at several places. When a breach was blown in the wall, the leader of the Lahore Muslims caused a proclamation to be made by the beat of drum that he had taken the city's administration in his own hands. He ordered that all the gates of the city should be thrown open, so that the deliverers might enter the city.

Ranjit Singh entered the city through the Lohari Gate. Sada Kaur led in her horsemen through the Delhi Gate. Thousands of citizens standing on house tops, raised loud shouts of welcome to their deliverers and showered flowers on them.

Lahore was thus taken with very little bloodshed or loss of life.

( 3 )

### AN ENEMY MADE A FRIEND

As Abdur Rahman had reported, Sahib Singh Bhangi was away from Lahore when the city was attacked and taken by Ranjit Singh. When Ranjit Singh's forces entered the city, Sahib Singh's family as well as Mohar Singh with his family and retainers fled through other gates. They were not chased and not molested in any way. However, Chet Singh shut himself in the fort.

Ranjit Singh had a mind to attack the fort. Guns were placed in position. But before firing had begun,

Sada Kaur advised him to hold back orders for the attack on the fort. She said to him, 'Let no shot be fired at the fort. We shall not waste any time and effort in forcing entry into the fort. Let Sardar Chet Singh remain in it as long as he likes. We need have no worry concerning him. Let us attend to other more important and urgent matters.'

Accordingly Ranjit Singh now addressed himself to the essential task of establishing peace and calm in the city. A proclamation was made assuring the people that they would not be molested in any way. 'We come,' it was announced, 'not as alien or hostile conquerors. We have come on your leaders' invitation. We come as your friends and deliverers. We shall do all we can to promote your welfare and to end all your troubles. Our soldiers have been warned that there is to be no *looting* and no molestation. If any one ignores the warning and indulges in *loot*, he shall be shot dead publicly. If any citizen has any complaint against any of our men, he should inform the nearest complaints-officer. It will be attended to at once and adequately.'

After entering Lahore, the first thing that Ranjit Singh did was to pay homage at important gurdwaras and offer prayers and thanks. His first public act thereafter, was to pay homage at the Royal Mosque (*Badshahi Masjid*) near the fort. Then he went to do the same at Wazir Khan's mosque.

He pitched his camp under the walls of the fort alongside the Royal Mosque. Deputations of leading citizens from each of three parts of the city waited upon him. They thanked him for his having delivered them from the Bhangi Sardars' misrule, offered him

their fullest loyalty, and expressed the hope that an era of peace and plenty would begin for Lahore and Lahoris. Ranjit Singh reassured them in every way.

As said above, Chet Singh had shut himself in the fort. Ranjit Singh had, in no way, disturbed him. Chet Singh did not take long to realize that yield he must, then why prolong the suspense and anxiety? He decided to deliver himself to the victor. The very next day, he sent his envoys to Ranjit Singh. The latter received them with courtesy and kindness. He asked them what their mission was. They said, 'Sardar Chet Singh sends his greetings to you. He says that he is ready to hand over the fort. All he prays for is that his life be spared. He will leave his all here for you.'

Sada Kaur was then by Ranjit Singh's side. She said to him, 'As I have often suggested, you should treat magnanimously all whom you subdue. Don't take away their all from them. Don't make them paupers. Don't earn their lasting enmity and hearty curses. Provide them handsomely, so that they may pass their lives comfortably and in peace. If you do that, your fallen adversaries will become your friends.'

Ranjit Singh accepted her advice. He said to Chet Singh's envoys, 'Go back and tell your master that no harm shall be done to him. He may take away all his belongings. He may depart in peace, at his pleasure.'

Soon Chet Singh came out of the fort, sad and crest-fallen. With bowed head, he approached Ranjit Singh. The latter rose from his seat and stepped forward to receive him. Then, in the presence of all,

he embraced his fallen adversary. Then he announced the grant to him of a handsome *jagir* for his life-time. Thus was a bitter enemy turned into a grateful friend.

The eighteen-year-old conqueror of Lahore entered the fort on July 7, 1799. Guns fired a royal salute. 'Trumpets of happiness were blown and kettledrums of victory were beaten in every direction.' There were hearty rejoicings everywhere in the city. The occupation of Lahore by Ranjit Singh marked the beginning of a just and peaceful government after decades of unrest, chaos and misrule.

## MAHARAJA OF LAHORE

( 1 )

### DISSIDENTS' CONSPIRACY

Before Ranjit Singh's debut on the political stage of the Panjab, Bhangis had been the most important of the Sikh misals. They were in possession of Lahore, Amritsar, and most of the Western Panjab. But by ejecting them from Lahore, Ranjit Singh had dealt them a big blow. Erosion of their position had started with their expulsion from that city. They could not—but feel perturbed and angry. It was but natural for them to plan and take vengeance on Ranjit Singh.

As said already at the time when Lahore was occupied by Ranjit Singh, Sahib Singh Bhangi, one of the three Sardars who had been in possession of the city was away. He was at Gujrat. When he heard of what had taken place at Lahore, he was upset and annoyed. He vowed vengeance against Ranjit Singh. He hurried to Amritsar, where a branch of the Bhangi family was in power. He consulted with his kinsmen and friends there. All shared the fear that, after having taken Lahore, Ranjit Singh would take Amritsar and other parts of the Panjab. They were all unanimously of the view that effective steps should be taken to curb Ranjit Singh's power before he became too strong. It

was decided that all Sikh Sardars, and even the Pathans of Kasur, should be brought together to oppose him.

Now, Ranjit Singh had twice led the combined forces of the Sikhs against Shah Zaman, and chased him out of the country. Thereby, he had become the hero of the Panjab. By ejecting the Bhangis from Lahore, he had taken a long leap on the road to ultimate supremacy. As his power and fame increased, the attitude of the other misaldars underwent a radical change. They had chosen him their leader in campaigns against their common enemy the Afghan invader. But his latest adventure and success had made them burn with hatred and jealousy. His former colleagues turned against him. They met to conspire against him. They allied themselves with the Bhangi Chiefs who had been turned out of Lahore.

Nizamuddin Khan of Kasur was also approached and informed of the intended campaign against Ranjit Singh. He readily joined their ranks. In fact, he had instigated some of the Sikh Sardars to conspire and rise against Ranjit Singh. His grievance against Ranjit Singh was that the latter had been chiefly instrumental in shattering his dreams of becoming the *Subedar* (Governor) of Lahore. Moreover, he had his fears about his own future, too. Ranjit Singh might, in time, decide to liquidate him.

All who were opposed to Ranjit Singh met at Amritsar. It was decided that he should be attacked and driven out of Lahore. Gulab Singh Bhangi was chosen to lead the combined forces of the dissident Sikh Chiefs. These forces, under Gulab Singh, and the Pathan forces, under Nizamuddin Khan of Kasur,

advanced towards Lahore in the spring of 1800. Ranjit Singh went out to meet them. He stopped their progress at Bhasin, a village about fifteen kilometres from Lahore.

Skirmishes took place now and then. There was no major or pitched battle. Gulab Singh Bhangi was not very eager or anxious to force a decision. He gave himself up to drinking country liquor and watching dances of nautch girls. One of his drinking bouts caused a haemorrhage which proved fatal. His death broke the spirits of the army which he had led. Dejected and disheartened, the soldiers melted away quietly. Ranjit Singh returned to Lahore, after a sort of two months' spring-time outing in the countryside.

A short time, thereafter, a chest containing twenty thousand gold mohars was unearthed in an old ruin named *Budhu da Ava*. His enemies having been scattered, and his treasury having been replenished, Ranjit Singh was fully established as the master of Lahore. He could now think of acquiring the rest of the Panjab.

( 2 )

### A HOLY PEACE-MAKER

Ranjit Singh had captured the capital of the Panjab, no doubt, but he was yet far from being the ruler of the Panjab. As a matter of fact, the capture of Lahore had won him more enemies than allies. The experience of Bhasin had made him alert and cautious. He was sure that his enemies would sooner or later, come against him again. So, he decided not to give them

time to gang up for that purpose. He made up his mind to deal with them, one by one.

The first among his enemies to receive his attention was the Raja of Jammu. He had collaborated with Nizamuddin Khan of Kasur against him. Ranjit Singh decided to punish the Raja. He marched towards Jammu. In lightning marches he soon came within six kilometres of the city. The Raja was in panic. He had no guts to stand the attack. He made his submission at once. He readily paid a penalty in the form of an elephant and twenty thousand rupees. At the same time, he promised to be loyal in future. In this campaign Ranjit Singh added to his domains the towns of Vairowal, Narowal and Sarsowal.

Since their expulsion from Lahore and their dismal failure at Bhasin, the Bhangi Sardars had been busy in conspiring against Ranjit Singh. Sahib Singh Bhangi, in particular, had been secretly increasing his army and fighting strength. Then he approached Dal Singh, the Chief of Akalgarh. The two plotted to attack Gujranwala.

Ranjit Singh learnt of their plans and preparations. He decided to fall on them before they were completely ready to attack his city. With a body of ten thousand soldiers and twenty cannon, he marched towards Sahib Singh Bhangi's city of Gujrat. Reaching there, he laid siege to it. The attack was so sudden that the Bhangi Sardar was taken by surprise. He shut himself up in his fort. From the fort's walls he directed gunfire against the besiegers. The fire was returned by the besiegers with greater force and precision,

Soon the Bhangi Sardar realized that he would not be able to hold out very long. So, he sent his men to Baba Sahib Singh Bedi of Una. They were told to inform the venerable Baba Sahib about the situation at Gujrat and to pray for his immediate intervention.

On learning of the open rift between the two leading Sardars, Baba Sahib Singh Bedi hurried to Gujrat. In the name of the Guru, he ordered the parties to lay down their arms. Such was the prestige of this saint-soldier descendant of Guru Nanak Dev, that the Sardars at once obeyed him without demur. Ranjit Singh was the first to act. He untied his sword from his waist, and placed it on the ground before Baba Sahib. The other Sardars followed suit. For full one hour the swords lay on the ground. All the time the Sardars stood with hands folded and heads bowed. Then Baba Sahib Singh Bedi took up Ranjit Singh's sword, tied it round the Sardar's waist, and said to him 'Cheer up. Within a short time, all your opponents will be extirpated, and your rule will be established throughout the country. I wish you to leave Gujrat alone, and be friends with the Bhangi Sardars.'

Ranjit Singh obeyed, and departed, leaving the town of Gujrat in the possession of Sahib Singh Bhangi. Then he proceeded towards Akalgarh in order to punish its chief, Dal Singh, who had plotted against him. Ranjit Singh captured the fort and took Dal Singh with him to Lahore. The Chief admitted his fault and prayed to be forgiven. Ranjit Singh readily pardoned his repentant enemy and left him in possession of his estate,

( 3 )

## CORONATION

Ranjit Singh was, no doubt, acclaimed as the leader of the Panjab, and was in possession of the Panjab's capital town. He was thus, in all but name, the Maharaja of the Panjab. But he hesitated to assume the formal title of Maharaja. He had cogent reasons for this hesitation. He feared that his assumption of that title might antagonize the other Chiefs. They might again conspire against him. That would be bad, and even harmful ; for their strength was not inconsiderable. In addition, they could secure co-operation of persons like Nizamuddin Khan.

But things were moving in his favour. In February 1801 leaders of the chief cities of the Panjab, Ranjit Singh's prominent Sardars, and his whole army through its officers submitted a joint petition to him. In it they prayed that a large gathering be called at Lahore to which all Sikh Sardars should be invited. In that gathering, it was suggested, the title of Maharaja of the Panjab be given to him by the people.

Ranjit Singh was still hesitant. But Sada Kaur persuaded him to assume the title. She said to him, 'Your assumption of the title will mark the full realization of our dreams. I, for one, have been yearning and praying for this, all these years. By taking on the title of "Maharaja of the Panjab," you will assume rights of sovereignty not only over all Sikhs, but also over the people who live within the geographical limits of the Panjab. It will give you a legal right to demand that the territories which, at any time, paid revenue to

Lahore, should pay tribute and owe allegiance to you. As you know, such territories are Jammu, Kashmir, the Rajput hill states, Multan, Bahawalpur, Dera Ismail Khan, Dera Gazi Khan, Mankera etc. The assumption of the title will open up charming possibilities. So you must agree, my dear Lion Victor of Battles.'

At last Ranjit Singh agreed to a formal investiture. The *Baisakhi* day of 1801 A. D. (April 12) was fixed for the ceremony. On that day, prayers were said in the mosques, temples, and gurdwaras, all over his domains. A large gathering was held in the fort. It was attended, among others by all Sikh Sardars and important leaders of all towns and cities. When all was ready, prayers were said before Guru Granth Sahib by Bhai Gurmukh Singh, leader of the Lahore Sikhs. Then Baba Sahib Singh Bedi applied saffron mark on Ranjit Singh's forehead, and proclaimed him 'Maharaja of the Panjab'. A royal salute was fired from the fort. In the afternoon, the Maharaja rode on the back of a richly decorated elephant and paraded through the city's main streets. The streets were crowded by his jubilant subjects, who showered gold and silver coins. In the evening, there was *deep mala* in the city, that is, the city was illuminated with oil-lamps. There was also a rich display of fire-works. The popular rejoicing continued throughout the night.

( 4 )

### A PANJABI STATE

Even after assuming the title of 'Maharaja of the Panjab', Ranjit Singh carefully avoided any display of his royal status. He wanted to be known more as a

peasant leader than as a king. He had been crowned king ; still he refused to wear an emblem of royalty on his simple turban. He refused to sit on a throne. He continued to hold *darbars* seated cross-legged in his chair. More often, he liked to sit reclined on cushions on a carpet, in the oriental fashion.

He ordered new coins to be struck. But the coins did not bear his effigy or his name. They bore, instead, the name and effigy of Guru Nanak. They were called *Nanak Shahi* coins, coins of the Emperor Nanak. Some coins had the same inscription in Persian as had appeared on the coins struck by Baba Banda Singh Bahadur, namely :—

*'Deg o tegh o fateh o nusrat bedirang*

*Yafz az' Nanak Guru Gobind Singh.'*

[The Kettle and the Sword (symbols of Charity and Power), victory, and ready patronage have been obtained from Guru Nanak Gobind Singh.]

Similarly, the seal of government did not bear his name, but the above Persian inscription. His government he called not his own but *Sarkar Khalsaji*, that is, of the people who had brought it into being. His court was called *Darbar Khalsaji*. He himself liked to be addressed by the simple title of *Singh Sahib*. By the people in general he was called *Sarkar*.

Soon after his coronation, Ranjit Singh directed his attention to re-organizing the administration, and improving the condition and look of Lahore. The city walls and gates were all repaired. He found that under

the Bhangi misrule crime had increased a great deal. To check it, he posted pickets at all strategic points. The city was divided into wards. Each ward had its *Chaudhri* or Headman, who was responsible for peace in his locality. He could call out the police when the order was disturbed. The first Head of Police (*Kotwal*) of Lahore was a Muslim named Imam Bakhsh.

He also reorganized the administration of justice, in such a way that cheap and ready justice was made available to all. The majority of the population was Muslim. They wanted their affairs to be regulated in accordance with the law of *shariat*. Hence, he appointed special courts for the Muslims. Nizam Din was appointed Chief *Quazi* (Judge). Two other well-qualified and trusted Muslims were appointed *muftis*.

A chain of dispensaries was opened in different parts of the city. In them Unani medicine was dispensed free of charge. Hakim Nuruddin, younger brother of Minister Fakir Aziz-ud-din, was appointed the Chief Medical Officer. Schools were opened in all parts of the city, where free education was imparted to children of all communities.

Within a short time, Ranjit Singh convinced the people that he did not intend to set up a Sikh Kingdom. He wanted, rather, to set up a Panjabi State in which all Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs would be equal before the law, and would have the same rights and duties. He invited talented Muslims and Hindus to join his service. Among his generals and ministers he had a number of Hindu and Muslims, too. He paid respect to their religious institutions by taking part in their



Fakir Nur-ud-Din  
Health Minister

festivities. Soon, the Hindus and Muslims came to recognize that their language (Panjabi), their economic and political interests, and their way of life differed in no way from those of the Sikhs, that they were all Panjabis. In short, they came to feel that they had a ruler and a government of their own, which they had not had for centuries.

## X

## TAKING OF AMRITSAR

Amritsar was the Panjab's second largest city. But commercially, it was more important than the largest city, Lahore. It was the chief trading centre for northern India. Goods were brought here from Central Asia by caravans, and exchanged for products of India. It was, consequently, a rich and prosperous city. For the Sikhs, it was their most sacred place. Indeed, as far as the Sikhs were concerned, Amritsar was the most important place in the world. Therefore, for anyone who aspired to be the leader of the Sikhs and the Maharaja of the Panjab, it was necessary to take Amritsar in order to justify his aspiration and title.

Amritsar was, at that time, divided among about a dozen Bhangi families. They owned different parts of the city. Every family had built its own tiny fortress in the part owned by it. It had in employment a number of armed tax-collectors. These tax-collectors were avaricious and hard-hearted. They made heavy collections at the point of the sword. Moreover, there were frequent frictions between the tax-collectors of different families. Quite often, these frictions led to street fights. Consequently, the citizens were weary of, and disgusted with, this state of things. They made secret approaches to Maharaja Ranjit Singh, and requested him to come to their deliverance.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh had already learnt that the Bhangi Sardars of Amritsar were preparing to fight against him. They were conspiring with Ramgarhias for that purpose. Mai Sukhan, the widow of the Bhangi Chief Gulab Singh, was said to be the most active participant in this conspiracy. It was she who had enlisted the Ramgarhias' support. Hers was the only family of importance in Amritsar. She was in occupation of the Govindgarh fort.

The Amritsar citizens' request reached the Maharaja in the autumn of 1802. Preparations for marching upon Amritsar were started at once. After a short time, the combined forces of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Sada Kaur, and Fateh Singh Ahluwalia reached near Amritsar. The city was encircled. The Ramgarhias who had promised to join the Amritsar Sardars, did not turn up. Their non-arrival was a great damper for the Sardars. They did not have the guts to come out to oppose the forces from Lahore. They shut up the city's gates. They mounted guns on their fortresses within the city and began to fire them on the besiegers.

Ranjit Singh was anxious to respect and preserve the sanctity of the Sikhs' most sacred city. After taking counsel with Sada Kaur, he ordered that guns with only blank powder charges were to be fired. Their noise would, he thought, help the Sardars to realize that resistance was useless. Loud war-cry of *Sat Sri Akal* was repeatedly raised aloud by the besieging Sikh forces. War-drums were beaten most energetically.

The booming of guns, the loud war-cries of *Sat Sri Akal*, and the thundering noise of the war-drums, filled



Akali Phula Singh  
General

the people with fear and made them very nervous. They were all eager to end the struggle.

At that time, there was, in Amritsar, a remarkable person who was highly respected by the citizens, and who was destined to play a most significant part in the Maharaja's battles, and to become a most important general in his armies of conquest. That person was Akali Phula Singh.

Born in 1791 in village Shinh, Amritsar district, he had joined the *Nihang* order in early life. He had dedicated his life to the care of the Sikh shrines. He was most devout and sincere, and loved to serve the people in accordance with Guru Nanak-Guru Gobind Singh's teachings. Consequently, he was highly respected by not only the citizens of Amritsar, but also by all others who knew or heard of him.

He was deeply distressed to find Sikh forces engaged in fighting among themselves. The spectacle of Sikhs firing on Sikhs was very painful to him. He consulted with the leading citizens. Then, accompanied by leaders of the Amritsar citizens, he marched out and stood between the opposing forces. He succeeded in persuading them to stop fighting. The Sardars surrendered one by one. Mai Sukhan was the last to agree to surrender. She gave up the fort. She was given a handsome pension for herself and her son, Gurdit Singh.

The fort of Amritsar thus passed into the Maharaja's hands. It was a valuable acquisition. He also acquired five cannon. One of them was Ahmad Shah Abdali's large Zam Zam, which had caused havoc among the

Maratha ranks at Panipat. It had been taken from the Afghans by the Bhangi Sardars. Since then it had been named the *Bhangian di tope*.

Akali Phula Singh was largely responsible for Maharaja Ranjit Singh's easy and bloodless victory at Amritsar. The Maharaja invited him to join his army. He agreed. He brought with him between two to three thousand *Nihangs* or *Akalis* to join the State Army. This acquisition, namely, that of Baba Phula Singh and his Akalis, was, for the Maharaja, far more important than the acquisition of the Amritsar fort and its five cannon. The Maharaja owed many of his celebrated victories to the desperate bravery of Baba Phula Singh and his Akalis.

The holy city of Amritsar, thus became a part of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's domain in December 1802. He was given a rousing, tumultuous reception in the sacred city. He rode through its narrow streets mounted on a decorated elephant. He was everywhere cheered most lustily by the jubilant crowds.

He and his Sardars then went to pay homage at the sacred shrine, the Darbar Sahib. They bathed in the sacred pool and made large offerings at the temple. The Maharaja donated a large sum with which the temple was to be built in marble and gold leaf.

## TOWARDS A UNITED PANJAB

( 1 )

## JHANG

A number of independent principalities still existed in the Panjab. Some of them still continued to declare their allegiance to Afghanistan. The Maharaja's ambition to create a united Panjab could not be fulfilled until these independent principalities were made to declare allegiance to the government of the Panjab. Accordingly, he sent invitations to these principalities to do so. Many of them complied. But some of them contemptuously turned down the Maharaja's invitation. Among them who did so was Ahmad Khan Sial, who owned the territories of Jhang. He was very very rich and the best horse-breeder of the Panjab.

As was but natural, the Maharaja decided to humble the pride of Ahmad Khan. In the beginning of 1803, he led his troops against Jhang. Ahmad Khan declared *Jihad* and enlisted thousands of Sial and Kharl tribesmen to help him in his 'holy war' against the infidel Sikhs. So, he appeared in the field at the head of a formidable host. On the arrival of the Lahore forces, the battle started with connonade from both sides. When Ahmad Khan's *Ghazis* (Muslim crusaders) had

exhausted their gunpowder, their horsemen made a fierce charge. The Maharaja's troops successfully withstood the fierce attack. Then they made the counter-attack. The Sials galloped away and took shelter in their fortress town. The Maharaja's elephants crashed one of the gates. His forces rushed in and compelled the Sials to lay down their arms.

In the commotion of the hand-to-hand fight in the fortress, Ahmad Khan managed to slip away to Multan. But after some time, he came to realize that the Maharaja did not want to deprive him of his territory; that what he wanted was to induce the Sials and other tribesmen of the region to throw in their lot with their Panjabi brethren.

So persuaded, he sent a deputation to the Maharaja. He admitted his mistake, prayed to be forgiven and agreed to make his submission. The Maharaja was ever ready to forget and forgive. He reinstated Ahmad Khan at Jhang. Ahmad Khan undertook to pay six thousand rupees as annual revenue to the Panjab government. He also gave the Maharaja a number of his best-bred horses.

( 2 )

## KASUR

Nizamuddin Khan of Kasur was a sworn and long-standing foe of the Sikhs and Maharaja Ranjit Singh. As we know, he had invited Shah Zaman to attack the Panjab. Then he had joined his own forces with those of the invaders and fought against the Sikhs who were led

by Ranjit Singh. Then he tried to persuade the Muslims of Lahore to invite and help him to assume *Subedari* of Lahore. Then he joined the dissident Sikh Sardars and fought against Maharaja Ranjit Singh at Bhasin. Still later, he conspired with Sahib Singh Bhangi of Gujrat against the Maharaja.

On account of all this, Maharaja Ranjit Singh was convinced that, unless Nizamuddin Khan's power was completely broken, he would continue to conspire and create trouble. Hence, after settling the affairs of Lahore, he turned his attention to the Pathans of Kasur. Towards the end of 1801, he sent Fateh Singh Kalianwala to chastise Nizamuddin. The Pathans came out to meet the advancing Lahore troops. They fought with desperate bravery. But they soon had to retreat behind the walls of the town. The siege did not last long. The Lahore troops blew up one of the gates. They entered the town and began moving down the Pathans. The latter laid down their arms. Nizamuddin agreed to pay a heavy penalty and to recognize Maharaja Ranjit Singh as his sovereign. The Maharaja accepted this.

But Nizamuddin did not keep the peace for long. Soon, he forgot his oath of allegiance to the Lahore Darbar. When the Maharaja was engaged in dealing with the small Muslim principalities in the south, Nizammuddin took advantage of his absence. He plundered some villages near Lahore. On hearing this, the Maharaja returned hurriedly and made straight for Kasur. Nizamuddin withdrew his troops into the town. He made preparations to stand a long siege. Ranjit Singh ordered heavy guns to be brought from Lahore. They soon pounded the walls of the fort. Nizamuddin

surrendered. The ever generous Maharaja pardoned him once again, and allowed him to keep his territory as before. Nizamuddin swore once more to be loyal to the Lahore Darbar.

After Nizamuddin's death, his place was taken by his brother Kutubuddin Khan. He began to make preparations to aim another blow at Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He enlisted a large number of fanatic Muslims for *Jihad* or holy war against the 'infidel' Sikhs. He fortified Kasur and stocked the fort with provisions that would be sufficient to outlast a long siege. He persuaded Nawab Muzaffar Khan of Multan to supply him with trained soldiers and war-material.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh learnt of what Kutubuddin Khan was doing. He sent his minister Fakir Azizuddin to Kasur in order to persuade Kutubuddin to give up his planned disloyal action against the Maharaja. Fakir Azizuddin used all his arts of persuasion. At the end of his long talk, he said, 'Khan Sahib, the days of religious wars are gone. The Maharaja commands the affection and loyalty of thousands of Muslims. It is wrong to say that to fight him and his troops is to engage in a *Jihad*. You will be fighting not against Sikhs but Panjabis—Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims. You should not think of engaging in such a fight. I would advise you to continue to be faithful to the Maharaja and the government of the Panjab.'

But Kutubuddin Khan refused to give in. He said, 'Be gone. I refuse to listen to one who eats the salt of an infidel. You are not much better than an infidel

'yourself. Tell your master to come. I am ready to receive him.'

On hearing Fakir Azizuddin's report the Maharaja made ready to deal with Kutubuddin Khan. He led his army himself. Akali Phula Singh, with his band of Nihangs, also accompanied the Maharaja.

The battle began on the morning of February 10, 1807. In the beginning, Akali Phula Singh and his Nihangs led the attack on the *Ghazis* or Muslim crusaders. The latter were driven behind their stockades. Then the artillery went into action. For full one month the Sikh guns continued firing on the walls of the Kasur fort. They failed to make any impression. At last, one night, Sikh miners made a tunnel up to the base of the western bastion. A heavy charge of gunpowder was put under it. It was fired early in the morning. It tore a large gap in the wall. Akali Phula Singh and his Nihangs charged through the breach. After a fierce hand-to-hand fight, the Akalis succeeded in vanquishing the Pathans and the *Ghazis*.

The fort was thus captured. Kutubuddin Khan tried to run away. He was, however, caught and brought before the Maharaja.

Ranjit Singh again showed his unique, wonderful magnanimity in treating his defeated adversary. He forgot Kutubuddin Khan's harsh, rude words against him and his Sikhs, he forgot the treacherous conduct of his family over the years; he forgot their repeated attempts to overthrow his government. He not only forgave Kutubuddin Khan and spared his life, but also

granted him a handsome *jagir* at Mamdot. Kasur was made a part of the Panjab under the Lahore Darbar.

( 3 )

### MULTAN

Multan was a district of the Panjab. It had been taken by the Bhangi Sardars more than once. But they had been ejected from there. Since the Afghan invasions, Multan began to have closer administrative ties with Kabul than with Lahore. Its ruling family, being Muslim, considered an alliance with the Afghans more convenient than one with Lahore. Ranjit Singh was determined to reclaim Multan and bring it within the country to which it belonged, that is, to make its ruler owe allegiance to Lahore instead of to Kabul.

Early in 1803, he announced his intention to proceed to Multan. Almost all his Sardars advised him against undertaking the expedition. They thought that Nawab Muzaffar Khan of Multan would prove too strong for the Lahore forces. But Maharaja Ranjit Singh struck to his resolve. He marched out of Lahore at the head of his troops.

Nawab Muzaffar Khan, on his part, was fully prepared to meet Ranjit Singh's attack. Raising the familiar cry of *Jihad* or holy war against the 'infidel' Sikhs, he had roused the Muslims of the neighbouring districts to come to his aid. They came in their thousands. But they could not stop the advance of the Lahore forces. The latter entered the suburbs of Multan without any difficulty. They directed their gun fire on the mud fort which was in the heart of the city. Muzaffar

Khan soon realized that he could not hold out for long. So, he made his submission. He agreed to pay indemnity, send his quota of revenue to Lahore instead of sending it to Kabul, and remain faithful to the Lahore Darbar. Thus Multan became a part of the Panjab.

But Muzaffar Khan soon forgot his oath of allegiance to the Lahore Darbar. In '807, he helped Kutubuddin Khan of Kasur against the Maharaja by sending troops and war material. After dealing with Kutubuddin Khan of Kasur, Maharaja Ranjit Singh decided to punish Muzaffar Khan for his share in Kutubuddin's defiance of the Lahore Darbar's authority. He ordered his army to proceed from Kasur to Multan. As before, Muzaffar Khan began to rouse his Muslim neighbours to come to his aid against the 'infidel' Sikhs; but this time none was willing to share his adventure. The Lahore forces entered the city unchecked. Muzaffar Khan found that resistance was useless. He made his submission and prayed for forgiveness. The ever generous Maharaja forgave him again. The Nawab paid twenty thousand rupees as penalty for his assistance to Kutubuddin Khan of Kasur.

But Muzaffar Khan was incorrigible. He again began to hold back payment of the promised revenue. Even otherwise, his conduct was obstructive and far from desirable. Influenced by his example, other southern Nawabs also became tardy in paying the revenues due to the Lahore Darbar.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh was convinced that Muzaffar Khan was untrustworthy ; that he would ever be posing a grave danger to the government of the Panjab.

He decided that for the creation of a united Panjab, it was necessary to liquidate the Nawab. Hence, early in 1818, he decided to make an all-out effort to capture Multan. A force of twenty thousand, under the command of Prince Khark Singh and Misr Dewan Chand, was ordered to Multan. Artillery, under the command of Ilahi Bakhsh, was also ordered to proceed thither.

Nawab Muzaffar became aware of the Lahore Darbar's preparations against him. He realized that this time he would not be able to bribe or buy off the Darbar. As before, he roused the Muslim population of the countryside to fight a holy war against the 'infidel' Sikhs. He got a good response this time. He also prepared the city and the fort for a long siege.

In due course, the Darbar forces arrived near Multan. The first engagement was in the open. Here the *Ghazis*—Muslim crusaders—did most of the fighting. The battle lasted one day. The *Ghazis* gained the martyrdom that they sought. Muzaffar Khan withdrew his regular forces behind the city walls. The Lahore troops surrounded the city and began to bombard its walls. For about two weeks, the defenders held their own in the city. But by then the city wall was blown up at several points. The Lahore army entered the city. The defenders retreated into the fort.

For a whole month, Ilahi Bakhsh's batteries pounded the fort walls, without making any impression. The Bhangi cannon, *Zam Zam*, was brought up. With each shot it sent eighty pounds of solid metal into the wall, and tore huge holes in it. The

other cannon also went on doing their work. The gunners worked with wonderful enthusiasm. But the besieged with equally dauntless bravery, plugged up the holes in the fort-walls. This went on for a pretty long time.

Then, one night, a party of Akalis or Nihangs, under the cover of darkness, managed to lay a mine under the fort-wall. Next morning, a huge portion of the fort-wall was blown off.

Thereupon Nawab Muzaffar Khan decided to surrender. He sent his envoys to discuss and settle terms of surrender. He accepted the terms and asked for a treaty to be drawn up accordingly. A draft was prepared. When, however, it was presented to him for signature, he was dissuaded by his soldiers from signing it. 'It is better' said the brave soldiers, 'to die in honour than to live in shame. We will not surrender, but fight the enemy to the last.'

The Nawab, accordingly, refused to sign the treaty. He got ready to fight. The breaches in the fort-wall were plugged up during the night. The besieged then hurled defiance at the besiegers.

So the attack was renewed. The gunners did their work with greater enthusiasm and precision. Many daring deeds of matchless bravery were performed, and many soul-stirring incidents occurred, during that historic siege of Multan.

One such soul-stirring incident is recorded by a Muslim eye-witness, named Ghulam Jilani, in his book

*Jang-i-Multan* (Battle of Multan). He says :—

‘While the bombardment of the fort-walls was going on, one of the Sikh guns lost one of its wheels. The Sardar in charge of the gun was of the opinion that if he could fire a few more shots, he would certainly succeed in making a breach in the wall. But that could not be done unless the lost wheel were replaced. There was no time for repairs. The delay was very dangerous. But from where to get the wheel or a substitute ? He had a brain wave, inspired, no doubt, by his unlimited, irrepressible enthusiasm for the cause. He said to his gunner, “There is only one way to achieve our purpose. We should come forward to serve as the wheel. We should lay our shoulders, one by one, under the axle on the broken side. The gun should go on firing shots till a breach is made in the fort-wall. Our lives will be lost, no doubt; but it will be a worthy contribution towards the victory of the *Panth*. We should gladly sacrifice our lives for the honour of the *Khalsa*. What is your opinion, brother ? Be quick. No time for deliberation.”

‘All his gunners jumped at the idea. Every one of them wanted to be the first to make the supreme sacrifice. There was wrangling amongst them for priority. But they were soon silenced by the Sardar. He said, ‘that they should come in only in the order of their ranks.’ “As I am the senior most,” added he, ‘I shall go in first of all. Others should follow in the order of their seniority.” He did accordingly. He supported the axle on his shoulder. The gun was fired. He fell down dead under the pressure of the gun.

'One by one, the brave gunners went forward to lay down their lives as their leader had done. It was after the tenth or eleventh shot that a breach was made in the wall. By then as many of the brave, patriotic gunners had sacrificed their lives under the pressure of the gun. As soon as the breach was made, Akali Sadhu Singh and his Akalis rushed to the spot with swords in hands, shouting *Sat Sri Akal*, and made a desperate charge through the breach.

'I saw this all happen before my eyes. More than once even I felt inspired and moved by this spirit of self-sacrifice to follow the brave gunners under the axle. But if there was anything that kept me back, it was nothing but the desire in my mind to narrate to the world the story of this unique spirit of self-sacrifice of these Sikhs in the cause of their nation.'

As said above, Akali Sadhu Singh and his Akalis made a desperate charge through the breach which the brave, self-sacrificing Sikh gunners had helped to make at the cost of their lives. The Nihangs under their leader closed upon the defenders and drove them back till they came to the steps of Muzzaffar Khan's palace. The old Nawab and his sons donned the green dress of their faith, perfumed their beards, and, with drawn swords, 'came out to answer the call of the angel of death.' They fought like heroes. But the odds were too heavy against them. Nawab Muzaffer Khan, his two sons, and a nephew of his were killed. His two younger sons were captured alive.

The fort was captured on June 2, 1818. A few days later, one of Muzaffer Khan's younger sons was brought into the Maharaja's court. The Maharaja had heard with

admiration of the bravery displayed by the old Nawab. He admired bravery above all manly virtues. He got up from his seat and took up the young Nawab in his arms and hugged him. That was how he treated a brave adversary's son.

A few days later, Nawab Muzaffar Khan's second captive son was brought to Lahore and taken to the Maharaja's court. The Maharaja got up from his seat, embraced the boy, and made him sit by his side. The lad said a lot of things against the Darbar troops and accused them of treachery. The Maharaja heard it all without feeling angry or annoyed even in the least. He only smiled and patted the lad in admiration.

That was how the lion-hearted, generous Maharaja received the sons of a fallen brave though troublesome adversary. Later, he granted the boys handsome *jagirs* for their maintenance.

Here one is tempted to recall the treatment which Nawab Wazir Khan of Sarhind had accorded to the two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh. They were brick-ed alive. Their only fault was that they were sons of a brave adversary. Here a devout follower of Guru Gobind Singh acting in a truly Sikh spirit spared the lives of his brave adversary's sons, treated them with affection, and gave them handsome *jagirs*. He forgot all the wrong actions of their father.

The conquest of Multan ended the Afghan influence in the Panjab, and broke up the solid group of Muslim states in the south. It subdued the chiefs of Bahawalpur, Dera Ghazikhan, Dera Ismail Khan, and Mankera. Moreover, Multan by itself was a valuable acquisition. It yielded an annual revenue of seven lakhs.

## XII

# KOH-I-NOOR (THE MOUNT OF LIGHT)

( 1 )

## THE ROYAL AFGHAN REFUGEES

How the world-famous Koh-i-Noor (the Mount of Light) came into Maharaja Ranjit Singh's hands is an interesting story. This priceless jewel, the most brilliant of all diamonds of the world, was taken from the famous mines of Golcanda in very ancient times. In the oldest times it is recorded as being in the possession of the Pandavas. Then it went 'underground'. It remained concealed or buried somewhere. In February 1628, it came into the hands of the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan. In January 1739, the Persian invader, Nadir Shah took it, alongwith the Peacock Throne, from the Mughal Emperor Muhammad Shah. On Nadir Shah's assassination in June 1749, this priceless jewel came into the hands of Ahmad Shah Abdali. After the latter's death it became the possession of his son, Taimur. After Taimur's death it was taken over by Shah Zaman. From him it came into the possession of Shah Shuja and his wife, Wafa Begum. It was from these two that the Koh-i-Noor came into Maharaja Ranjit Singh's hands on June 1, 1813.

In order to understand how and why Shah Shuja and his wife, Wafa Begum, parted with this precious possession of theirs, we shall have to peep a little into Afghanistan's history. After Taimur's death, Shah Zaman ascended the throne of Kabul. He was soon overthrown and replaced by his brother Mahmud. The latter put out his brother Shah Zaman's eyes, in order to put him out of the picture for ever. But soon, Shah Shuja, a brother of his, ousted Mahmud from Kabul and occupied the throne. Soon, however, Shah Shuja was expelled and Mahmud re-occupied the throne of Kabul. Shah Shuja was able, once again, to capture the throne, but was deprived of it again by his brother Mahmud after four months. All this drama of seating and unseating this or that son of Taimur was done by one Wazir Fateh Khan, leader of Barakazai tribe.

Driven from the throne, Shah Shuja fled to Attock. There he found asylum with its governor, Jahan Dad Khan. But, while at Attock Shah Shuja began to try to win over the king-maker, Wazir Fateh Khan, Jahan Dad Khan was bitterly opposed to the Wazir. When therefore he came to know of Shah Shuja's move, he had him put in chains and sent for safe custody to his brother; Ata Muhammad, governor of Kashmir.

In February 1810, the six hundred and odd wives of Shah Shuja, and the blinded Shah Zaman, with his concourse of wives, came to the Panjab and prayed for asylum. Maharaja Ranjit Singh granted them a liberal pension and made arrangements for their residence at Rawalpindi. But Shah Zaman would not sit idle even in exile. He began to send envoys to foreign powers. They were to persuade those foreign powers



Fakir Aziz-ud-Din  
Prime Minister

to help him in recovering the throne of Kabul. Maharaja Ranjit Singh did not like this. To put an end to Shah Zaman's intercourse with foreign powers, he suggested that the royal families would be more comfortable and secure in the capital.

In November 1811, Shah Zaman, the one-time conqueror of Lahore, and his wives and relations came back to that city as beggars.\*

On arrival at Lahore, Shah Zaman was treated with honour. He was escorted by State troops to the spacious house, Mubarak Haveli, set apart for him in the city. The Maharaja, dressed in ceremonial saffron, welcomed him with an embrace. He than presented to him a sum of one thousand rupees.

( 2 )

## DELIVERERS

Thus sheltered and provided for the royal refugees from Afghanistan began to live a life of peace in Lahore. Fakir Az-zuddin was deputed to look after their comforts. But after some time, there arrived in Lahore an agent of Wazir Fateh Khan. His object was to solicit the Maharaja's help for conquest of Kashmir. On behalf of Wazir Fateh Khan, the agent offered to the Maharaja an equal division of the loot acquired during the campaign, and, thereafter, nine lakh rupees every year.

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\*While leaving for home after his fourth invasion, Shah Zaman had proclaimed that he would return soon and conquer India. He had come back now, but not as an invader or would-be conqueror but as a beggar to seek asylum from Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Did he remember his parting threat to Ranjit Singh and the Panjab ?

Shah Zaman and his relations learnt of the agent's arrival and mission. Shah Zaman, Shah Shuja's senior wife, Wafa Begam, and her sons were terrified. They feared that if Wazir Fateh Khan and Mahmud captured Kashmir, Shah Shuja, who was imprisoned there, would fall into their hands. Who could say what they would do to him. Wafa Begam was stricken with deep grief and anxiety. She sent a message to the Maharaja through Fakir Azizuddin, saying, 'If the Maharaja puts forth good efforts and brings about the occasion when the honourable Shah may come to Lahore, an invaluable piece of diamond would be offered in compensation.' That 'invaluable piece of diamond' was no other than the Koh-i-Noor diamond.

The Maharaja took counsel with his courtiers. They expressed themselves in favour of making all efforts to get Shah Shuja released from captivity and restored to his grief-stricken family. It was a humane task which, as Guru Nanak-Guru Gobind Singh's Sikhs, it was their duty to perform. They also felt that this task would become easier if the Darbar forces were to work in conjunction with those of Wazir Fateh Khan. It would, thereby, be possible to fulfil the objective of the Wazir as well as that of Shah Shuja's family.

Accordingly, early in the spring of 1812, the pick of the Darbar's troops were ordered to Kashmir. They were under the command of the Maharaja's best generals, Diwan Mohkam Chand and Dal Singh. They reached Jehlam where they were joined by Wazir Fateh Khan and his army.

The two armies left Jehlam in the first week of December 1812. The shrewed Diwan Mohkam Chand

soon realized that the Wazir was not sincere and that he was not likely to keep his promises given to the Darbar. He warned the Maharaja and told him, 'Wazir Fateh Khan has taken two big forts with their treasures. He has kept the whole loot. He should have given half of it to the Darbar as promised.'

The Maharaja instructed Diwan Mohkam Chand to give no sign of any dissatisfaction or doubt. He added, 'Go on conforming with his wishes. Remember that our main object is not loot or territory, but release of the unlucky Shah. We have to concentrate on that humane task.'

It was learnt that Shah Shuja was imprisoned in the fort of Shergarh. The Afghans pressed on at frantic speed. They wanted to reach Shergarh before the Darbar forces should do so. They were soon two marches ahead of the Lahore army. Diwan Mohkam Chand felt sure that if the Afghans managed to reach there first, they would do violence to Shah Shuja. So, he made a short cut and reached Shergarh before the Afghans. He at once assaulted the fort. The Afghans also reached soon and joined in the assault. The fort was forced to surrender. The Afghans rushed in and busied themselves in discovering and looting the treasury. But Diwan Mohkam Chand's soldiers rushed about searching for the royal prisoner. They found him in a damp, dark dungeon. He was chained, hand and foot, dressed in dirty rags, and famished from want of adequate food. They brought him away and took him to their camp. Wazir Fateh Khan demanded that Shah Shuja be handed over to him. But Diwan Mohkam Chand firmly refused to do so. Thereupon

the Wazir tried to take the Shah by force. But he failed in his attempt. Then he accused Diwan Mohkam Chand of breaking his word and said, 'I will not give you any share in the booty.'

Shah Shuja's chains were broken. He was dressed in new clothes and properly fed. Then he was taken to Lahore with due honour and safety.

( 3 )

### KOH-I-NOOR CHANGES HANDS

In due course Shah Shuja reached Lahore with the Darbar army. The Maharaja received him with the same pomp and ceremonial as that with which he had received his blinded brother, Shah Zaman, a year earlier. The Shah was delivered safely to Wafa Begam at Mubarak Haveli, the spacious mansion which had been placed at the disposal of the royal Afghan refugees.

On the following day, a message was sent to Shah Shuja and his wife. Wafa Begam, asking them to deliver the Koh-i-noor. Neither the Shah nor his wife made any reply to the note. It was but natural for them to feel unwilling to part with so precious an object. But it had been solemnly promised to be handed over on the Shah's deliverance and return to his family. In the venture, over one thousand soldiers had been sacrificed and a huge expenditure had been incurred. Moreover, Wazir Fateh Khan had taken possession of Kashmir without sharing the loot. He had clearly no intention of paying nine lakh rupees a year as promised. All this was due to the Darbar's forces having rescued

and brought over Shah Shuja and not having handed him over to his bitter enemy Wazir Fateh Khan. In view of all this, how could the Darbar let the Shah and his wife break her promise ?

A reminder was sent to the Begam after a few days. Again there was no reply, no response. Then Fakir Azizuddin met her and urged her to honour her word. He told her how much the venture undertaken to release her husband had cost the Darbar. He added, 'It was on account of my strong persuasion that the Maharaja undertook the difficult, costly campaign. I assured him that you would most readily honour your word. Please realize my awkward ugly position. I feel very awkward, even ashamed. The Maharaja has a good reason to be angry with me. He might cease to trust me in future. Honour your word and let the Maharaja have the promised priceless precious stone.'

The Begam replied, 'The said diamond is not with me. I pawned it with a moneylender in Kandhar.'

Fakir Azizuddin said, 'Then why did you promise to give something which you did not possess ?' The Begam kept mum.

On hearing the Begam's reply, the Maharaja shook his head, and said, 'I have not the least doubt that the diamond is with the Begam. She is telling a lie. She is a liar and promise-breaker. But I don't want to employ any hard measures at present. I would make her a fair offer. Go and tell her that I shall make a token payment of three lakh rupees now and assign a *jagir* of fifteen thousand rupees a year to the family in lieu of the *Koh-i-Noor*.' But even this liberal offer

failed to bring round the Begam and her husband. Fakir Azizuddin's urgent appeals had no effect on them.

The Maharaja's patience was exhausted. He could have taken possession of the diamond by force. Seeing the way in which it had been taken away from India, such a course would have been quite excusable. But the Maharaja decided to avoid violence. The course followed by him was an honourable one.

The Maharaja sent word to the Shah and his wife that the diamonds should be delivered without any further fuss or delay. He decided to give an indication of what the consequences of the Begam's persistent refusal to honour her word would be. He placed a heavy guard round Mubarak Haveli. In this way, Shah Shuja, who had till then been a royal guest, became a virtual prisoner.

But for many days, the Shah made no move. The Maharaja then ordered that the rations supplied to the Shah's household be reduced. The Kotwal was instructed that the Shah and his family were to be treated as being under arrest. Soon the Shah realized that he had no alternative to handing over the Koh-i-Noor. So at last, he agreed to honour his wife's word. A date was fixed for the delivery of the coveted jewel.

On the appointed day, June 1, 1813, the Maharaja rode to Mubarak Haveli to take over the Koh-i-Noor. He was accompanied by six hundred horsemen. Shah Shuja received him cordially, embraced him, and conducted him to his room. Seated there, they inquired

about each other's health. Then they fell silent. Shah Shuja made no move to deliver the diamond. The prolonged silence irritated the Maharaja. He whispered to one of his courtiers, 'Remind the Shah of the object of our visit. He seems to be lost in thought.'

On being reminded, the Shah beckoned one of his servants and ordered him to bring the diamond. The servant went into the ladies' compartment. He came back with a bundle. He gave it to the Maharaja. The Maharaja unwrapped the bundle, the Koh-i-Noor came out. He examined it keenly with his single right eye. He then rewrapped it in the same cloth and rode away.

The Maharaja was delighted with the possession of the Koh-i-Noor. A week later he brought it out for examination. He showed it to some select jewellers. They declared that it was priceless, for no other similar jewel existed anywhere else. It was three and a half tolas or about forty one grammes in weight and equal to a hen's egg in size.

## TOWARDS A GREATER PANJAB

( 1 )

### END OF THE GURKHA MENACE

In 1809 the Gurkhas under Amar Singh Thapa subdued the hill chieftains along the Himalayan range. They were now trying hard to capture Kangra. Sansar Chand, ruler of Kangra, appealed to Maharaja Ranjit Singh to help him against the Gurkhas. On the other hand, the Gurkha leader sent word to the Maharaja, 'If you stay away and let me take Kangra, I shall pay tribute to you according to your pleasure.'

But the Maharaja considered Kangra to be a part of the Panjab. He would not let it be captured by the Nepalese. So he replied that he would defend Kangra against all outsiders. Sansar Chand's request was considered favourably. It was agreed to help him against the Gurkhas, but on one condition, namely, that he must declare Kangra to be a part of the Panjab, and surrender the Kangra fort to the Lahore forces. Sansar Chand accepted these terms.

To begin with, the Maharaja ordered all the chiefs of the Kangra region to stop selling provisions to the Gurkha army. He ordered his own troops to cut the Gurkhas' supply lines with Nepal. The Maharaja arrived

in Kangra and demanded admission to the fort. Sansar Chand hesitated and made evasive replies. He said, 'I shall hand over the fort as soon as the Gurkhas are made to withdraw.'

The Maharaja knew that Sansar Chand was not a man of word. His word could not be trusted. Moreover, the Maharaja was too shrewd to be taken in by Sansar Chand's ruse. Now, it so happened that one of Sansar Chand's sons was the Maharaja's hostage. The Maharaja put him under arrest. This step opened Sansar Chand's eyes. He surrendered the fort. On August 14, 1809, a detachment of the Panjab troops took possession of the Kangra fort.

The Gurkhas were soon short of rations, and hence, in great difficulties. Still they held on stubbornly. The Maharaja waited till they ran out of rations. Then they began to retreat. Thereupon the Maharaja attacked them with full force. Amar Singh Thapa turned back to face the attack. But having been short of rations for many days, the Gurkhas could not stand the strain of hand-to-hand fight against the Panjab infantry. The tall Sikhs, with their long curved *kirpans*, fell upon the short-statured Gurkhas, who were armed with their short *khukris*. The Maharaja had been watching the fight from a mound. He mounted his horse and plunged into the fight. The Gurkhas took to their heels.

The Maharaja was greatly impressed by the stubborn resistance offered by the Gurkhas. To honour brave men and reward their deeds of bravery was a major attribute of the Maharaja's character. When the fight with the Gurkhas was over, the Maharaja

ordered his men not to chase the defeated, fleeing, brave adversaries. He allowed Amar Singh Thapa time to retire without further molestation. Nay, he ordered his own Sardars to help the brave Gurkhas in collecting their equipment. Some hill-rajas utilized the occasion to plunder the vanquished foe. They were severely rebuked by the Maharaja and made to restore the loot. The Gurkhas returned to their homes. The Gurkha menace to the Panjab was thus ended for ever.

The Maharaja entered the fort of Kangra on December 24, 1809. Among the chiefs who paid homage to him were the rulers of Kangra, Chamba, Noorpur, Kulu and Datarpur, Kotla Jusrata, Basohli, Jaswan, Mandi, Suket.

( 2 )

### END OF THE AFGHAN MENACE

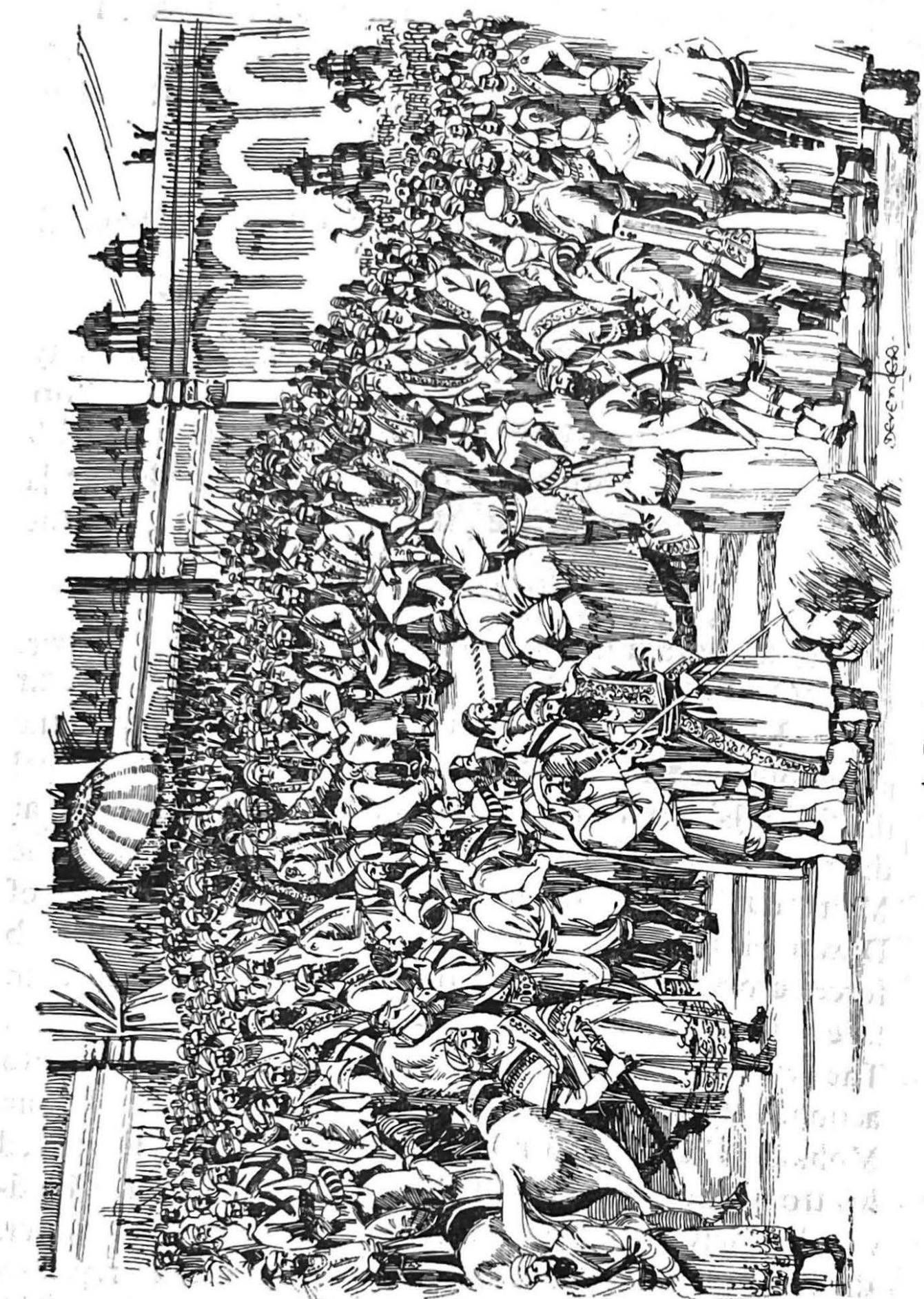
The fort of Attock was in the possession of Jahan Dad Khan. His brother, Ata Muhammad Khan was the governor of Kashmir. Ata Muhammad had been ejected from Kashmir by Wazir Fateh Khan. The Wazir's next victim was to be Jahan Dad Khan. The Maharaja came to know of the Wazir's design. The Maharaja's plan was to make Attock and its neighbourhood a part of the Panjab. If the fort of Attock were to pass into Wazir Fateh Khan's hands, the plan would become difficult of execution. So, in order to prevent the fort from passing into the Wazir's hands, the Maharaja decided to take it into his own possession. He sent his minister Fakir Azizuddin to negotiate with Jahan Dad Khan. Fakir Azizuddin said to him, "You know or should know that Wazir Fateh Khan

is after you. If he comes, you will not be able to withstand him. He will turn you out of the fort. You will have nowhere to go ! I come with a generous offer from the Maharaja. He will give you a handsome *jagir* in return for the fort."

Jahan Dad Khan accepted the offer and handed over the fort to Fakir Azizuddin.

The Attock fort was considered to be the gateway of India. When Wazir Fateh Khan heard that the fort had passed into the Maharaja's hands, he was mad with anger and disappointment. He wrote to the Maharaja asking him to evacuate the fort or face the consequences.

The Maharaja had no intention to oblige the Wazir. He sent more troops to garrison the fort. Wazir Fateh Khan began to incite the tribes in the neighbourhood of Attock and to exhort them to expel the 'infidels' from their midst. He himself came up at the head of his troops and surrounded the fort. The Maharaja sent a strong force under the charge of Diwan Mohkam Chand to meet the Wazir. The Panjab forces crossed the river Attock. They came face to face with Wazir Fateh Khan and his Afghan troops. The two armies faced each other without going into action. By then the summer season set in. Diwan Mohkam Chand then made a clever move. He placed his troops between the Afghans and the river. Finding themselves thus cut off from their supply of water, the Afghans took the initiative. They made repeated charges on the Panjab forces in their bid to break through to the river. Diwan Mohkam Chand got his



A Darbar Scene

...the world colour with the original  
of that art which is the truest form of humanity.

elephant's legs chained. This he did to prevent it from running back. The Panjabi lines remained unbroken. The Panjab infantry repulsed the Afghan assault with their steady fire.

The Panjabis could slake their thirst from the river and come back to the battle. The Afghans, on the other hand, had to fight in the intense heat of July without a drop of water to drink. Hence they turned their attention from the fort to the river. They wanted to reach the banks of the Attock. The Panjabis repulsed the Afghans and kept them away from the river banks. At last, the Afghans were exhausted with thirst and exertion. They broke their ranks and fled. They left their heavy guns and equipment to the victors. One thousand Afghans lay dead on the field.

This was the first victory of the Panjabis against the Afghans. The fort of Attock had been regarded as the sentinel of India. It had been taken from the Hindu Raja Jaipal by Mahmud Ghaznavi in 1000 A.D. Since then it had remained in the hands of the invaders. Its recapture meant the liberation of Northern India from the Afghan menace.

( 3 )

### CONQUEST OF THE PATHAN CITADEL

The Maharaja was eager to extend his kingdom in the north-west by capturing Peshawar and its neighbourhood. He was waiting for a favourable opportunity to do so. He got it in the summer of 1818. At that time Wazir Fateh Khan of Afghanistan was murdered

by Prince Kamran, son of Shah Shuja's brother Mahmud. The Wazir's numerous brothers, who were spread out in different parts of Afghanistan, Peshawar and Kashmir, called for vengeance. So a civil war started in Afghanistan. Each party to the war was anxious to occupy Kabul. Hence the Afghan frontier with the Panjab was left undefended.

The Maharaja sent for Akali Phula Singh to whom the north-western frontier was well known. He questioned the Akali about Attock and its surroundings. Akali Phula Singh replied, 'Attock is like a small island in the midst of a sea of turbulent tribesmen. If the north-western region is to be made secure against the Pathans and Afghans, the frontier will have to be extended to Peshawar. It will be better still to push up the frontier to the entrance of the Khaibar Pass. If we succeeded in doing that, the close alliance between the Afghans and the Pathan tribesmen will be broken. Then the most important gateway into India will be slammed in the face of the invaders from that direction.'

The Maharaja was much impressed by Akali Phula Singh's words. His resolve to capture Peshawar was strengthened. He felt that there was no time to lose. The Afghans were then engaged in a civil war. Their south-eastern frontier with the Panjab was left practically undefended. This fact would make his task much easier.

On October 15, 1818 the Maharaja marched out of Lahore at the head of his troops. Among the generals that he had with him were two who knew these lands

and the people, and whose names were a terror among the tribes. They were General Hari Singh Nalwa and Phula Singh Akali.

Passing through Rohtas, Rawalpindi and Hassan Abdal, the Darbar troops arrived in the plains of Hazara. From there a survey party was sent across the river Attock, by boat. The main army halted on the eastern bank. It was to cross when a suitable ford could be located by the scouts.

The western side of the river was inhabited by Khattak tribesmen. They ambushed the survey-party sent by the Darbar army, and destroyed it completely. Now, the place where this massacre occurred was within the Darbar's territories. The Khattak tribesmen paid tribute to the Maharaja. Hence, their brutal attack on the Darbar army's survey party was not an act of war. It was an act of treachery and rebellion. Those who had done it had to be punished.

The Maharaja was infuriated on hearing the news. He ordered his troops to get ready to cross over. But the river was in high flood. It was seemingly impossible to cross it. The troops were lined up near the bank. The Maharaja shouted aloud 'Khalsaji' let us all pray to God. He can subside the flood; He can tame the river in no time. Let all fix their minds on the Almighty Father and pray.' The Maharaja then prayed to God and Satguru. The troops also prayed. Then he threw a tray of gold coins into the river as an offering. Then he rode his elephant into the fast flowing flooded river. According to legend current in the Panjab and the North Western Frontier, as soon as the Maharaja's elephant stepped into the river, the

flood subsided.\* The horsemen plunged their horses in the river and reached the other bank. Others swam to that bank.

The Darbar army now fell upon the Khattaks. The latter did not put up much resistance. Their strongholds at Khairabad and Jahangiria were occupied. The Maharaja then pressed on to Naushera.

On hearing the defeat of the Khattaks, Muhammad Khan, the Afghan Governor of Peshawar, lost his heart. He ran away, leaving behind big guns and other war-materials in good condition.

The Maharaja entered the famous stronghold of the Pathans on November 19, 1818. He gave strict orders to his soldiers that none was to lay his hand on any person or property. A proclamation was then made by the beat of drum. The citizens were thereby assured that they would not be molested in any way. They were advised to carry on their occupation as usual.

The next morning, the Maharaja rode on his elephant through the bazars of Peshawar. He was cheered all along the route. It was the first time in seven hundred years that the citizens of Peshawar saw an Indian Conqueror ride through the streets.

The Maharaja stayed in Peshawar for four days. During that time, envoys came from Dost Muhammad Khan and Yar Muhammad Khan, brothers of Wazir Fateh Khan. The envoys made a present of fifty

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\*This legend had a great effect on the tribesmen's mind. It gave currency to a saying among them: '*Khuda ham Khalsa shud*' —Even God became Khalsa or identified Himself with the Khalsa.

thousand rupees, fifty loads of dry fruit, one hundred good horses, etc. They also delivered a letter from the two brothers. In it they prayed that they be entrusted with the administration of Peshawar. They agreed to pay a revenue of one lakh rupees a year. They added that they would abide by all orders of the Lahore Darbar, and accept the Darbar's title over the city. The Maharaja accepted the offer. Yar Muhammad Khan was made the Governor of Peshawar.

( 4 )

#### TO THE BORDERS OF CHINA AND TIBET

Very soon after returning from Peshawar, the Maharaja began to make plans for an all-out campaign to take Kashmir from the Afghans. Jabbar Khan, governor of Kashmir, was ruling with an iron hand. He treated the non-Muslims with utmost cruelty.

Many Hindus were compelled to leave the valley. One such person was Jabbar Khan's own Revenue Minister, Pandit Birbal Dhar. He came to Lahore and advised the Maharaja that it was a good moment to attack and take Kashmir.

Preparations were made for the attack. By April 1819, the Darbar forces assembled at Wazirabad. That place was to serve as the main base of operations and the Maharaja's headquarters.

A column of the Darbar army, under Prince Khark Singh, advanced up to Baramgulla without much resistance and then reached Shupaiyan. Another column of the Darbar army, under Misr Diwan Chand, also came up. The two columns were in view of each

other. They also came in view of Jabbar Khan with twelve thousand Afghans on the plain of Shupaiyan.

After allowing his troops a few days' rest Misr Diwan Chand quietly surrounded the Afghan host. Next morning, the Darbar's artillery opened fire on the Afghans. Jabbar Khan did not possess an adequate number of guns. He ordered his cavalry to charge. The Afghan horsemen captured a number of the Darbar army's guns. At this time, Akali Phula Singh and his Akalis fell upon the Afghan horsemen and infantry. The Afghans could not stand the Nihangs' charge. They turned and fled to the hills. Jabbar Khan was severely wounded. He barely escaped with his life.

Prince Khark Singh and Misr Diwan Chand entered Srinagar the next day. The Prince issued strict orders that none was to loot or molest the citizens in any way.

The Maharaja returned to the plains. He first went to Amritsar for thanks-giving. He returned to Lahore on September 22, 1819.

Kashmir was an important acquisition for the Panjab. It fetched seventy lakh rupees a year as revenue. Moreover, it extended the State's frontiers to the borders of China and Tibet.

## TWO IRREPARABLE LOSSES

( 1 )

## AKALI PHULA SINGH

Kashmir was taken by the Maharaja in 1819. Its administration was entrusted to Yar Muhammad Khan. But the Pathan tribesmen did not like to be under the government of Panjabis or their nominees. They rose in open revolt against Yar Muhammad Khan. They began to raise cries of *Jihad*. The chief instigator was Yar Muhammad Khan's elder brother Azim Khan. He aroused the religious sentiments of the Pathans. He proclaimed his intention of liberating the Pathans from the Panjabi infidels' yoke. The result of his instigation campaign was that the whole tribal area began to resound with cries of *Jihad*. In a short time, over twenty-five thousand *Ghazis* (Muslim crusaders) volunteered to fight as the Prophet's soldiers. They were determined to achieve victory or martyrdom.

With this huge host of *Ghazis*, Azim Khan advanced towards Peshawar in January 1823. Yar Muhammad Khan left Peshawar and hid himself in the neighbouring hills. Evidently, he was not

unwilling to hand over the city to his brother Azim Khan. Azim Khan occupied Peshawar without any difficulty whatsoever.

The Maharaja ordered his army to proceed northwards. Prince Sher Singh and General Hari Singh Nalwa led the advance columns. They crossed the river Attock by means of a boat-bridge. They came up to Jahangiria and occupied the fort there. The *Ghazis* came up and besieged the fort. Thus Prince Sher Singh and his companions found themselves surrounded on all sides by people thirsting for their blood. The siege operations were conducted by Azim Khan's brother, Dost Muhammad Khan, and Jabbar Khan. This Dost Muhammad Khan was the same man who, along with his brother Yar Muhammad Khan, had been entrusted with the administration of Peshawar. He had vowed to be loyal to the Maharaja.

The Maharaja arrived on the eastern bank of the river Attock. He found that the boat-bridge across the river had been destroyed by the Pathans. The river was in flood. It was impassable. The Pathan snipers made it impossible to make a fresh boat-bridge, across the river.

Soon the Maharaja was informed that the Pathans planned to destroy Sher Singh and his men the next day. Something had to be done at once. The river seemed impassable. But nothing daunted, the Maharaja ordered his soldiers to cross the flooded Attock as best as they could. He himself was the first to plunge his horse into the river. His army followed. The Maharaja and his army were soon in

control of the western bank. The *Ghazis* were taken by surprise. They took to their heels. Jahangiria and its garrison were saved.

After retreating from Jahangiria, the Pathans retrenched themselves in the plain outside Naushera. Between Naushera and Peshawar flowed the river Lunda. The army of Azim Khan could join the *Ghazis* at Naushera only after crossing that stream. That army was now approaching the Lunda.

The Maharaja consulted his generals. They advised him to attack and finish off the *Ghazis* at Naushera before Azim Khan's army could come to their aid. He concurred.

Early next morning, a religious gathering was held with Guru Granth Sahib in the midst of the assembly. After the morning service, prayers were offered for success of the campaign to be started that day. All present took vows to fight to the last and prayed for God's and the Guru's help in fulfilling their vows.

Soon the army was on the march. The Maharaja rode to a mound and took the salute from the troops going into action. As each group passed, raising shouts of *Sat Sri Akal*, the Maharaja acknowledged the salutation by raising his naked sword to his forehead and then he waved it in the direction in which the army was to march.

As this march past was in progress, news was brought to the Maharaja that Azim Khan was approaching the Lunda stream with a huge Afghan army and forty big guns. On hearing this news, the

Maharaja proposed that the offensive should be postponed till his General Ventura came up with Darbar's artillery. He was expected to reach that very day.

But Akali Phula Singh would not agree to this postponement. He said, 'How can we break our word given to the Guru this morning? Having expressed his resolve before Guru Granth Sahib to go and fight to the last, no Sikh can tarry or turn back. I and my companions will keep our vow. We go into the fight. Come what may.'

So saying, Akali Phula Singh and his Nihangs raised shouts of *Sat Sri Akal*, and fell upon the *Ghazis*. The latter came down from the hill where they had taken up their position. They far outnumbered the Nihangs, and expected to finish them off in no time. Seeing this, the Maharaja ordered the rest of his army to advance and fall upon the *Ghazis*.

Akali Phula Singh was in the midst of severest fighting. A deadly hand-to-hand fight was going on between the Nihangs and the *Ghazis*. Akali Phula Singh was wounded in the thigh. He could not stand. He bandaged his wound and rode back into the thick of the battle on horseback. Then he got more wounds which made him still less capable of wielding any weapon. His horse was shot under him. He got into a howdah and drove the elephant into the midst of the enemy. The *Ghazis* could now see the man who had humbled them often. They fired at him from all sides. His body was riddled with bullets, but he went on roaring like a lion, till he collapsed on his elephant.

The news of his death further infuriated the Nihangs. They gave no quarter to the enemy. The Ghazis could not stand the Nihags' charge. They got disorganised. At this critical moment, the Darbar cavalry rode into the disorganized masses of the Ghazis, and transfixed them with their lances.

In the meantime, Azim Khan had come up to the river Lunda on the west. Facing him on the eastern bank was the Darbar artillery under General Ventura. He could not cross the river. He helplessly watched the massacre of the Ghazis from the other side of the river. He could not come to their aid. By sunset the Ghazis were finished off or made to fly. Azim Khan was too ashamed to show his face to the people of Peshawar. He ran away to Afghanistan.

Three days later, the Maharaja entered Peshawar at the head of his victorious army. The citizens gave him a warm welcome. The city was illuminated at night.

A few days thereafter, Yar Muhammad Khan and Dost Muhammad Khan presented themselves before the Maharaja. They craved his pardon. He forgave them readily. Yar Muhammad Khan was again appointed Governor of Peshawar. The Maharaja then returned to his capital.

( 2 )

### GENERAL HARI SINGH NALWA

As said already, Peshawar had been taken by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Its control or administration had been

entrusted to Afghan chiefs. They paid stipulated tribute or revenue to the Maharaja. These chiefs had, a number of times, given proofs that they were not sincere and trustworthy. The Maharaja felt that, in order to make the North-West Frontier really secure, Peshawar should be brought under his direct control. Accordingly, he instructed Hari Singh Nalwa to take over the governorship of Peshawar from the Afghan Governor, Sultan Muhammad. This was done and the city was garrisoned by Panjabi soldiers.

On assuming the new charge, the Nalwa directed his attention to taming the semi-savage Pathan tribesmen who inhabited the country surrounding Peshawar. These Pathans had been, for centuries, persecuting and frightening the Panjabis. They held the Panjabis in utter contempt. Hari Singh Nalwa decided to compel them to change their attitude towards his people. He decided to teach them that the Panjabis were superior to them, and had to be regarded with respect and awe.

He felt that soft or half-hearted measures would be out of place when dealing with the semi-savage Pathan tribesmen. Hence he decided to be ruthless. Whenever the Pathans ambushed any Panjabis or shot at them from hidden places, Hari Singh Nalwa raided the Pathans' villages and destroyed their homes. Within a short time, the name of Hari Singh Nalwa became a terror in the tribal territory. So much so that, to this day, the Pathan women, when they want to frighten their children, say, 'Hush child, Nalwa is coming.'

Another step taken by him to make the land secure was to build a chain of forts. They were to be within



**S. Hari Singh Nalwa  
General**

sight of each other. Two of them stood on the entrance of the Khaibar Pass. They were Shabkadar and Jamrud. They were fortified with special care. They were placed under the command of the Maharaja's ablest officers. Shabkadar was placed under the command of Lehna Singh Sandhawalia. It had a garrison of one thousand nine hundred. Jamrud, with a garrison of six hundred, was placed under the command of Mohan Singh.

On account of the measures taken by General Hari Singh Nalwa, Dost Muhammad of Kabul became agitated and angry. He concluded that the Maharaja was contemplating to attack Afghanistan. He hurried towards Peshawar. He addressed rude letters to the Maharaja. He told him to evacuate Peshawar or be prepared to taste the Afghan sword. The Maharaja wrote back in the same tone. He said that he would welcome a trial of strength between the Afghans and the Panjabis.

In one of his letters Dost Muhammad wrote : 'If out of haughtiness, the Maharaja does not pay heed to my request, I will gird up my loins for battle, and become a thorn in the courtyard of your rose garden. I will muster an army of crusaders who know nothing except fighting upto death, I will create tumult on all sides and a scene of chaos everywhere.'

To this Maharaja Ranjit Singh's answer was : 'We have broken the heads of refractory chiefs and put our foes in iron. If Dost, out of avarice and greed, desires to give us battle with the small force he has, let him come.....'.

Dost Muhammad applied to the English for help against the Maharaja. But they blankly refused to help him. Then he raised a cry of *Jihad* or holy war against the 'infidels from the Panjab'. He exhorted Muhammadans to rise to a man to destroy the Panjabis. He then learnt that the Maharaja was pre-occupied with Prince Nau Nihal Singh's marriage and that Hari Singh Nalwa was ill and confined to bed at Peshawar. He thought that that was a good time for him to start operations against the hated Panjabis.

So thinking, he started his campaign. His plan was to isolate the Panjabi garrisons at Shabkadar, Jamrud, and Peshawar, so that they should be unable to come to each other's relief. After such isolation, he planned, he would reduce them, one by one.

The first to receive attention was Jamrud. It was the most advanced outpost, nearest to Afghanistan. It was also the weakest link in the chain of the fortresses built by Hari Singh Nalwa. As said already, it had a garrison of six hundred under Mohan Singh's command.

Dost Muhammad's first move was to send one detachment of his army to Shabkadar. It was intended to prevent Lehna Singh from going out to aid Mohan Singh. His main army, numbering twenty-five thousand with fifty heavy guns, went and besieged Jamrud. To oppose this huge host, Mohan Singh had only six hundred soldiers and a few light guns. Evidently, the odds against him were too heavy.

Within a few hours, the Afghans' heavy guns fired their heavy shots and brought down the walls of the

fort in many places. Mohan Singh's men dug trenches. They used their muskets with deadly precision and remarkable effect. They were able to hold the Afghans at bay for four days. Then Mohan Singh sent word to Hari Singh Nalwa that he would be unable to hold out longer. This message was taken to Peshawar by a Sikh woman. Disguised as an Afghan, she stole through the Afghan army and reached Peshawar in a wonderfully short time. As soon as Hari Singh Nalwa got the message, he got up from his sick bed and hurried to Jamrud.

The Afghans were frightened to learn that the terrible Nalwa had risen. They at once raised their siege of Jamrud. They took up position in the valley of Khaibar, so as to have a safe route of escape in case of defeat.

Hari Singh Nalwa drew up his forces in battle formation and waited for the Afghans to attack him. The Afghans were thrice as many as his troops. But he was fully confident of victory. He knew that the Afghans did not possess the guts to withstand his Panjabi soldiers. He waited for seven days. All this time the two armies faced each other without going into action. Hari Singh Nalwa realized that the Afghans were too afraid to attack or engage in battle. Hence, on April 30, 1837, he ordered his troops to advance. The Panjabis drove the Afghans before them as the wind drives dry leaves. They captured eleven Afghan guns.

The Panjab army then started chasing the retreating Afghans. In the heat of the chase, Hari Singh

Nalwa's column got separated from the main army. Hari Singh Nalwa, riding an elephant, was ahead of his men, leading the attack on the fugitives. Dost Muhammad's son, Muhammad Akbar Khan, was watching the battle from an encampment on a hill. He saw that Hari Singh Nalwa and his men were far ahead of the main army. He swooped down on the Nalwa's column. He and his men directed their attack against Hari Singh Nalwa.

Hari Singh Nalwa was grievously wounded. He was taken back to Jamrud. He knew that his end was approaching. He gave orders to his officers that his death was to be kept a secret until the Afghans were driven beyond the Khaibar Pass. This feat was accomplished soon.

An Englishman, Dr. Wood, wrote an account of the battle and General Hari Singh's death. In it he wrote, 'Hari Singh received four wounds : two sabre cuts across his chest, one arrow was fixed in his breast which he deliberately pulled out himself, and continued to issue orders as before, until he received a gunshot wound in the side, from which he gradually sank and was carried off the field to the fort, where he expired, requesting that his death should not be made known until the arrival of the Maharaja's relief.'

On getting information of Hari Singh Nalwa's death, the Maharaja broke down with grief. He beat his breast in anguish and shed bitter tears. He soon controlled himself and started towards Jamrud. In one day he rode from Lahore to Jehlam, a distance of one hundred and sixty five kilometres. By the time

he reached Jamrud, the Afghans had been all driven beyond the Khyber Pass.

Hari Singh had sent to the Maharaja post haste reports about the hostilities which had broken out in the Peshawar province. In a letter accompanying the earliest of them, he had requested that his soldiers who had been sent for Nau Nihal Singh's marriage be sent back immediately. This report had been sent when the fighting had not yet actually begun.

As a matter of routine, these reports and the letter had been delivered to Dhian Singh. It was his duty to place them before the Maharaja. But out of motives not difficult to guess, he did not put them up before the Maharaja.

Then arrived the news of the Nalwa's death. On getting the news, the Maharaja broke down with grief. He beat his breast in anguish; he shed bitter silent tears; he could not utter a word for some minutes. Then he controlled himself. He enquired from Dhian Singh whether any earlier reports had been received. Dhian Singh told him of the reports and the letter in which Hari Singh had asked for the immediate return of his soldiers. Dhian Singh added that he had not thought it fit to show the reports and the letter to the Maharaja until he (the Maharaja) was free from his engagements concerning the Prince's marriage.

On hearing this, the Maharaja was filled with rage. He rebuked Dhian Singh in stern words. Some writers say that he struck Dhian Singh on the head with the *garva* that he was holding at the time. He

said, "you acted very wrongly. Peshawar and Hari Singh were more important to me than anything else. If I had been informed in time, I would have sent at once not only his soldiers, but also a large army to suppress the rising there. If you had shown me the reports and the letter immediately on their receipt, the life of my brave and seasoned general could have been saved. You have done a huge wrong and a very demaging dis-service to the Panjab Darbar. You are responsible for causing us an irreparable loss."

Then he controlled himself and started towards Jamrud. In one day he rode from Lahore to Jehlam, a distance of one hundred and sixty five kilometres. By the time he reached Jamrud, the Afghans had been all driven beyond the Khaibar Pass.

The Afghans had failed to capture Shabkadar and Peshawar. They had been made to retreat from Jamrud. They had been driven beyond the Khaibar Pass. Still, they were in high spirits; for they said, 'What if the battle is lost ? We have killed Nalwa who was worth a hundred and twenty five thousand men.'

SOME CHARACTERISTIC  
ANECDOTES

( 1 )

EQUAL JUSTICE FOR ALL

( i )

Once a person from Gujranwala came to the Maharaja and made the following complaint :

'Your general, Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa, has a *haveli* which adjoins mine in Gujranwala. Recently he has windened it by encroaching upon my land. He has high-handedly and wrongfully walled in, and added to his *haveli*, a few hundred square yards of my land. I pleaded with him and his men. Puffed up with power, they have paid no heed to my entreaties. I have come to my benevolent *Sarkar*, who is known to be just and a protector of the weak. I crave for justice.'

The Maharaja acted at once. He visited the place and made enquiries. He found that the complaint was genuine, that his general had, in fact, forcibly occupied that man's land. He ordered the wall to be demolished and shifted back to where it justly should have been.

( ii )

Hukam Singh Chimni was a brave general and personal friend of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He was the *Nazim* or Administrator of Attock and Hazara. He had a personal grudge against a man named Said Khan, resident of Kot Hasan Ali. Unluckily, Said Khan was accused of some grave offence. Hukam Singh thought it to be a good opportunity to wreak his vengeance upon Said Khan. He did not make a full and thorough enquiry to find out the truth and establish the guilt or innocence of the accused. Most deliberately and unjustly, he sentenced Said Khan to death.

Said Khan's relatives took their complaint to the Maharaja. He had the matter thoroughly sifted. He was convinced that Hukam Singh had misused his authority in order to wreak personal vengeance. The Maharaja imposed on Hukam Singh a fine of one lakh and twenty thousand rupees. The amount was given to Said Khan's family. Hukam Singh was dismissed from his post.

( iii )

Maharaja Ranjit Singh had given strict instructions to all his officers that full and equal justice must be given to all people, high or low, that no leniency should be shown to an offender on account of his belonging to a high family or holding a high rank. His officers, with rare exceptions, obeyed the instructions in letter and spirit. Here is an instance out of hundreds.

Diwan Sawan Mal was the Governor of Multan. Once, a poor peasant came to him with a complaint.

He said, 'One of your sardars has used up my green crops to feed horses. He has paid me nothing by way of its price. I am a poor man. Help me, dear venerable Diwan Sahib.'

Diwan Sawan Mal called up all his courtiers and sardars. He told the peasant to recognize out of them the one who had wronged him. The peasant pointed at one of them. The man thus pointed out was the Diwan's eldest son, Ram Das. The Diwan ordered him to be put in prison. The orders were promptly carried out as desired by the Diwan.

The peasant later learnt that the person punished was Diwan Sawan Mal's son. He went to the Diwan and prayed that Ram Das be pardoned. But the Diwan did not accept his appeal. He said, 'If I don't punish a son of mine who has committed a crime, with what face can I punish other people's sons. Ram Das must remain in prison as ordered. "Equal justice for all" is our *Sarkar's* motto for us all.'

The Maharaja heard of this incident. He was immensely pleased with Diwan Sawan Mal's conduct. He conferred further honours and *jagir* on him.

( iv )

In 1830, the *zimindars* of Rawalpindi circle complained to the Maharaja that their revenue assessment done by his officers was unjust and excessive. The Maharaja assured them that full justice would be done to them. He sent General Ventura to assess a portion of the district. The General checked up the assessments of the *ilaqa* of Rawalpindi, Takhtpuri, Banda, Mughal,

and Sayidpur. He found the assessment to be fair and even light.

But the *zimindars* were not satisfied even with General Ventura's decision. They remained uneasy and discontented. The Maharaja summoned the heads of tribes and villages to Lahore. He treated them with hospitality and distinction. After several days, he met them and heard what they had to say. Finding that their objections had some weight, he fixed comparatively light assessment. At the same time, he assured them that what they had suffered was not at his hands, but was the work of his officials. Still, he was sorry for it all. They returned to their homes fully satisfied.

The Maharaja conferred on them a still greater benefit than even the very light assessments. He transferred the chief official who had been responsible for their suffering. In his place, he appointed Bhai Dal Singh, who was a man of known integrity of character and amiable temper. Bhai Dal Singh treated the people in a manner that made him loved and respected. He was regarded and honoured by all as a just and faithful officer. The people were happy under him. They were grateful to the Maharaja for the kind treatment that they had got from him.

( 2 )

#### LOOKED UPON ALL 'WITH ONE EYE'

( i )

Once the Muhammedan residents of a village came to

the Maharaja with a complaint against their Hindu and Sikh fellow-villagers. They said, 'The Hindu and Sikh residents of our village don't let us say our *Azan* or Muslim call to prayer. They are thus acting against your declared policy of full religious freedom to followers of all religions. We have come to our dear *Sarkar* for justice. They are depriving us of our religious freedom. They should be made to desist from doing that.'

The Maharaja summoned some leading Hindu and Sikh residents of that village. He told them of the complaint brought against them. He desired them to let him know what they had to say in that connexion. They replied, 'Gracious Singh Sahib, may the Guru be still more kind to you ! If these good men look back in history a little, they will realize that they have no justification for their hue and cry against us. Under the rule of these people's co-religionists, we, Hindus and Sikhs, were denied religious freedom altogether. We could not perform our religious worship and rites. We were forbidden to ring bells, blow conch-shells or trumpets, and to sing our hymns even in our temples. Now, with the grace of our Gurus, we have Sikh rule in the Panjab. These people must get the same treatment under the Sikh rule as we got under the Muslim rule. It is just a case of tit for tat, our gracious Singh Sahib.'

The Maharaja said, 'You are labouring under a grievous misconception. What you have here in the Panjab now is not Sikh rule but Panjabi rule. You should all regard yourself as Panjabi first, and Sikhs, Hindus, or Muslims, afterwards. Far more

than being a Sikh, Hindu or Muslim is the fact of being a Panjabi. All have to get equal rights, equal freedom, equal opportunity, and equal justice. But, by the way, what is your objection to their *Azan* ?'

The Hindu and Sikh leaders said, 'The same as they and their coreligionist rulers had against our conch-shells, trumpets, and bells. We hate to hear the very sound of their *Azan*. We have to shut our ears with our fingers when their *mullah* cries aloud at the top of his shrill sharp voice, from the top of his building. Our religious sentiments are hurt by the *Azan*. He says it not once or twice, but five times a day, beginning with one early in the morning, and ending with one quite late in the evening. We cannot tolerate it.'

The Maharaja said, 'I don't like that anyone's religious sentiments should be hurt.'

Then he turned to the muslim complainants and said, 'What for does your *mullah* cry aloud at the top of his voice from the top of his building.'

They replied, 'The *Azan* is a call to us for prayers. By crying aloud as he does, the *mullah* tells us that it is the time for *namaz* or prayer, and that all Muslims should assemble in the mosque, or say their prayers wherever they be at the time.'

The Maharaja said, 'But suppose we could devise another method of telling the Muslims of your village that it is the time for *Namaz*. Will that serve the purpose?'

The Muslims replied, 'If such be our just and gracious Sarkar's pleasure, and if it satisfies our friends here, it will serve our purpose all right.'

The Maharaja turned to the Sikhs and Hindus before him and said, 'I hereby forbid the *Azan* in your village ; but on one condition. You must take upon yourselves the responsibility of informing every Muslim of your village, wherever he be, at home or in the fields, that it is the time for *Namaz*. You will have to do that five times a day as the *mullah* does with his *Azan*. You must be punctual at all times. You must never fail to inform all Muslims of your village in time, that it is the time for *Namaz*. Do you agree ?'

The Hindus and Sikhs cried out, 'That is an impossible task for us. How can we run about, five times a day, to the houses and fields of these people, informing them that it is the time for *Namaz* ? We cannot take up that responsibility.'

The Maharaja said, 'Then let their *mullah* continue to inform them in his own way. More, you must all live as brothers, as sons of the same soil, as Panjabis.'

The Hindus and Sikhs had to yield. The Muslims expressed their gratitude to the Maharaja. They all—Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims—promised to live in peace and friendship, and respect each other's religious sentiments.

( ii )

Once a Muslim calligraphist came to Lahore. He had spent many years in making a copy of the holy Quran. He had taken it to all Muslim princes of India, one after the other. All of them admired the work. But none of them came forward to give him an adequate price for his labours. He then came to Lahore,

intending to sell it to Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Foreign Minister, Fakir Azizuddin. He presented it to the said Minister. The latter praised the work, but expressed his inability to pay for it. It was beyond his means, he said.

The Maharaja overheard what passed between them. He summoned the calligraphist to his presence. He asked him to give the book to him. On getting it, the Maharaja respectfully pressed the holy book against his forehead. Then, he scrutinized the writing with his single right eye. He was impressed with the excellence of the calligraphist's work. He bought it for his private collection.

Some time afterwards Fakir Azizuddin asked the Maharaja why he had paid such a high price for a book for which he, as a Sikh, could have no use. The Maharaja replied, 'God intended me to look upon all religions with one eye. That is why He took away the light from the other.'

( 3 )

## KINDNESS AND GENEROSITY

( i )

It was the Maharaja's practice that, when famine occurred in any part of his kingdom, he made arrangements for free distribution of foodgrains among the affected people. Each family got its quota according to the number of its members. It was his custom to visit the distributing centres incognito, in order to see that all was going on the well and properly.

Once, famine occurred in Lahore and its suburbs. Centres were started for free distribution of foodgrains. The Maharaja, disguised as a rustic, went to see one of such centres. At a little distance from the centre, he saw a blind old man and a young child. A load of foodgrains lay between them on the ground. The Maharaja approached them and said, 'What is the matter, elder brother ?'

The old man said, 'As you see, brother, I am old and blind. This boy here is my grandson. His father is dead. I have another grandson and three grand-daughters. Then there are their mother and grandmother. Thus we are a family of eight. We are *dhabis* (washermen) living at Muzang. We came here to get foodgrains being distributed free by our generous and kind *Sarkar*. His man gave us our quota for eight persons. The load is too heavy for us. We have a long distance to go. How to carry this load there is my problem. I wait and pray to God to send some strong kind-hearted man to help me.'

The Maharaja said, 'Then God has answered your prayer. I am going to Muzang myself. I shall carry the load to your house. Dear child, lead your grand-father and me to your house. Will you ? There is a good boy.'

The old man blessed the kind-hearted stranger and thanked God for his having heard and answered his prayer. The Maharaja lifted the load and placed it on his head. Thus loaded, he followed the blind old man and his little grandson. He carried the load all the way from near the fort to Muzang.

He put down the load at the *dhobi's* door and turned to go. The old man thanked and blessed him sincerely and profusely. The Maharaja told him, 'Elder brother, I have only done my duty. Farewell.'

Just then a soldier in uniform came that way. He recognized the Maharaja in spite of the disguise. He saluted him and said, '*Jai Sarkar!*'

The Maharaja placed his finger on his lips as a sign to the soldier to keep mum. Then he quickly walked away to visit some other similar centre.

( ii )

Because of his open-handed generosity, Maharaja Ranjit Singh was generally called *paras* or Philosopher's stone. Poor men of no consequence, on coming in touch with him, became rich and important ; just as base metals, on touching *paras*, were believed to become gold.

Once he was riding on horse back through the streets of Lahore. Crowds of people cheered him as he went along, showering gold and silver coins this way and that. An old woman pierced through the crowd of spectators. She reached near the Maharaja's horse. She held an iron cake-pan (*tawa*), in her hand. Its bottom was coated with soot. She wanted to go up to the Maharaja. His bodyguard stopped her. She began to beseech and cry. The Maharaja heard her cry. He told the guard to let her come up. She was soon by his side, with iron *tawa* in her hand.

Then he said, 'Grandma, what do you want ? Tell me, be quick.'

The old woman said, 'I want to do this.' So saying, she began to rub his foot with the black, Soot-covered iron cake-pan. Some soot stuck to his foot. The guard took this action of hers as an insult to the Maharaja. He was about to push her away. The old woman cried, 'Let me finish, my child !' The Maharaja told the guard not to molest her. Then he said, 'Grandma, what have you done ? What do you want to finish ? And why ?'

She replied, 'Gracious Sarkar, people say that our Maharaja is *paras*. It is also said that if iron touches *paras*, it turns into gold. I am an old woman, with none to support me. I heard of your approach. I wanted to avail myself of this opportunity. I took up the only piece of iron I had in my house. I wanted to get it changed into gold, so that I may have enough for my needs. Hence it was that I tried to rub your feet with this iron cake-pan. But your guard does not let me finish this process, and achieve my objective. O *Paras*, permit me to touch your foot with the iron cake-pan, so that it may become gold.'

The Maharaja was much amused. He burst into a hearty laugh. 'Grandma, I did not know it.' Then he ordered his treasurer to give her gold equal in weight to the weight of her iron plate. His orders were carried out at once. The poor old woman became rich and went home, blessing the *Paras* Maharaja.

( iii )

Once, Maharaja Ranjit Singh was touring through the countryside on horseback. He was riding along a path near a village. Near the path there was a *ber* tree;

laden with red and yellow ripe fruit. Some boys were throwing stones at the tree in order to make some of the fruit fall on the ground.

The Maharaja approached, but the boys did not notice or mind him. They went on throwing stones at the *ber* tree, and enjoyed the *bers* that fell. By chance, a stone thrown by one of the boys struck the Maharaja on the back. He turned to see from where it had come. In the meantime, one of his attendants ran up to the boys whose stone had struck the Maharaja. He caught him by the neck and was about to beat him with his stick. The Maharaja shouted, 'Don't strike the lad. Bring him to me.'

The boy was brought to the Maharaja, all trembling with fear, shedding tears, and begging to be forgiven and released. The Maharaja said to him in a soft, kind voice, 'Don't fear, dear lad. Don't cry. Let me know why you threw the stone at me. Did you want to strike me ? Did you aim it at me ? Why ?'

'No, Sir,' said the boy, rubbing his eyes with the back of his fist. 'I did not aim it at you, sir, I did not intend to strike you, kind sir. I threw it at the *ber* tree; To my ill luck, sir, it struck you instead of the tree, you happened, sir, to be just where the stone was to fall. Pardon me, kind sir, I shall be careful in future. I shall never again let a stone strike any passerby.'

The Maharaja said, 'What would you have got if the stone had struck the tree instead of me ? Tell me, there is a good boy.' 'Kind sir,' said the boy, 'I expected that a handful of red and yellow fruit would fall for me to eat and enjoy ?'

The Maharaja said, 'I am not going to own or let it be said that I am worse than a *ber* tree. If a *ber* tree, on being struck with a stone, gives a handful of ripe fruit to him who strikes it, I then certainly should do something better.'

Then he turned to his treasurer and said, 'Let the boy make as deep and big a cup as he can by joining his open hands. Then fill that cup with gold coins. The tree would have given him a handful of red and yellow fruit. I give him a double-handful of yellow gold pieces.'

( 4 )

### SWEET HUMILITY

( i )

Once the Maharaja happened to commit some lapse which constituted a breach of *Khalsa Rahat* or Rules of Conduct for the *Khalsa*. Some time thereafter, he came to Amritsar to pay homage at the sacred shrine. Akali Phula Singh used to stay at Amritsar and look after the gurdwaras. He came to know of the Maharaja's intended visit to the sacred temple. With a drawn sword in his hand, he ran to the entrance of the temple called the *Darshni Deohri*. He reached there before the Maharaja could do so. He stood in the Maharaja's way and said, 'Stop. A Sikh who has broken the *Khalsa Rahat*, as you have, cannot be allowed to enter the sacred temple.'

The Maharaja stepped back a few paces, folded his hands, and said in a humble tone, 'I admit my lapse,

I beg the Guru's *Sangat* to pardon me. I am prepared to suffer gladly the penalty that the *Sangat* may impose upon me for this lapse.'

After consultation with the Sikh congregation, Akali Phula Singh announced the following penalty. 'The Maharaja's arms should be bound behind his back with the trunk of a tamarind (*Imli*) tree that grows in front of the *Akal Takht*; and twenty one whip-strokes should be struck on his body.'

The Maharaja, on hearing the *Sangat's* verdict, bowed his head, went up to the tamarind tree, and stood near it with his arms behind him, ready to be bound to the tree and whipped. A sturdy young Akali stood nearby, with a whip in his uplifted hand. He was looking at Akali Phula Singh and waiting for a signal from him. The Lion of the Panjab was standing with his arms bound behind him to the tree. His head was bowed in respectful acceptance of the verdict given by the Guru's *Sangat*. He was thus waiting for the whipman's strokes, watched by a crowd of people who were his subjects. The sight was most touching, indeed. Tears filled the eyes of all spectators.

Then Akali Phula Singh said aloud, 'O Guru Khalsa, the Maharaja is willing to bear the penalty imposed on him. See, there he stands, ready to receive the strokes. He is repentant. This is enough. I appeal to the Guru Khalsa to pardon him. If all present agree, let them shout *Sat Sri Akal*.'

Loud shouts of *Sat Sri Akal* were raised from all sides. The Maharaja was unbound. He was administered baptism afresh at the *Akal Takht*. Then he was allowed to enter the sacred temple.

( ii )

One day the Maháraja, riding on his biggest elephant, was going in a procession in Amritsar. He passed by the balcony from which Akali Phula Singh was watching the procession. Akali Phula Singh said in a yelling voice. 'O, you one-eyed man, where did you get the he-buffalo you are riding on ?'

The Maharaja looked up, humbly joined his palms, and replied, 'It is the gift that your honour gave me.'

All wondered at the Akali's boldness and the Maháraja's humility.

( 5 )

### FAITH AND DEVOTION

( i )

In 1826, the Nizam of Hyderabad, Deccan, sent to Maharaja Ranjit Singh an extremely beautiful and costly canopy as a present. Supported on silver poles it was put up on a plot in the Shalimar Gardens. At that time, the Maharaja was celebrating the annual Basant festival there. A big darbar was to be held there. Accompanied by his courtiers and Sardars, the Maháraja came to that place. Stepping under it, he looked up at the beautiful, costly canopy overhead. He at once stepped back from under it. So did also the courtiers and Sardars who had gone under it along with him. He said, 'This grand canopy is too grand for me. It is fit to adorn the *dardar* of the *Sachcha Patshah*, the true king. I am not fit to sit under it. It is fit only for the Guru's *Sangat* (Sikh congregation) that gathers at

the sacred temple in the city founded by Guru Ram Das. Let it be presented at that holy of holies. Take it down and send it there.'

His orders were obeyed. The canopy is now in the *toshakhana* of the Golden Temple, Amritsar and is spread over the Holy Scripture, Guru Granth Sahib, on great religious occasions.

( ii )

The Maharaja yearned to meet someone who had seen Guru Gobind Singh 'with his own eyes'. He was eager that such a one should describe to him the Guru's person and personal appearance. 'It will be a blessing and great pleasure,' said he, 'to meet and talk to such a blessed grand old person.'

He sent instructions to all his officers in all places to try to find out some such person. The search was successful at last. An old Muslim, aged well over a hundred years, was found who had seen Guru Gobind Singh. He was brought to Lahore by means of special comfortable conveyance. He was brought before the Maharaja. The very sight of the aged blessed man sent a thrill of joy through the Maharaja's heart and frame. He got up from his seat, ran to meet him, hugged him, and planted several kisses on his eyes, saying, 'Blessed are these eyes of yours with which you saw my Master, Guru Gobind Singh. Blessed are you who saw him with your these eyes.'

Then the Maharaja touched the old man's feet most reverentially, wiped off dust from those feet, and applied it to his eyes and forehead. Then he went round the

grand old man a number of times, as one goes round a sacred person or place. He kept the man as his honoured guest in his palace for several days.

Whenever the Maharaja desired the old man to describe the Guru's person and personal appearance, the latter would go into a trance, with eyes closed and head bowed. On coming to himself, he would say, 'The Guru's face shone with such glorious light that it dazzled the beholders' eyes. All I can recollect is that his arms reached well below his knees. I have seen none other with arms so long. Have you seen one, Gracious Sarkar ?'

After several weeks, the old man was bidden respectful farewell. He was given a large sum in cash and a number of rich presents. He was then seated on a well-decorated elephant and sent home. The Maharaja and his courtiers walked by his side beyond the gates of the fort.

( iii )

Once there came to Lahore a celebrated painter. He persuaded a number of the Maharaja's courtiers to recommend him to the Maharaja. He wanted to draw a portrait of the Maharaja. The courtiers made the request at an opportune time. But the Maharaja refused to let his portrait be painted by anyone. On their insistence, he said, 'I agree on one condition. The painting should show Guru Nanak Dev seated on a throne, and my head placed on his sacred feet.'

The painter said that in a portrait the face was the most important part to show the painter's art and skill.

In the position suggested by the Maharaja, his face would be hidden.

The Maharaja said, 'Well, the first painting shall have to be as I have said. Afterwards you may prepare another. In that the Guru should be shown sitting on a throne and I, standing before him, praying, with palms joined together.'

Accordingly, the painter prepared two portraits as desired by the Maharaja. They were hung up in the gurdwara room in the Maharaja's palace. The painter was richly paid for his labour.

( iv )

The great Maratha leader, Hulkar, was defeated by the British Commander, Lord Lake. Hulkar and his Rohilla confederate, Amir Khan, fled to Amritsar. They intended to seek help from the Sikhs. Hulkar visited the sacred temple and made rich offerings. This he did in order to earn the Sikhs' good opinion.

Lord Lake pursued them and came up to the Beas with his army. Both Hulkar and Lake sent messengers to Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who was then at Multan. Hulkar prayed for help against the English. Lord Lake requested him not to give any help to his enemy.

The Maharaja was faced with a complex problem. He realized the gravity of the situation. He sent word to all his principal Sardars to join him at Amritsar. He wanted to seek their advice.

A meeting of the *Sarbat Khalsa* was called at the *Akal Takht*. It was attended by the leading Sikh chiefs

and dignitaries. Both sides of the case were presented. On the one side were the refugees, Hulkar and Amir Khan. They had sought shelter and protection. It was a matter of honour for the Khalsa to protect them, not to send them away disappointed. On the other side were the English who demanded that the Maharaja should expel Hulkar from the Panjab. 'If he is not expelled,' they added, 'we shall attack him where he be. The Anglo-Maratha conflict will then be extended to the Maharaja's domains. The consequences will be serious for the Panjab and Panjabis.'

The problem was knotty in the extreme. No unanimous decision could be arrived at. At last the Maharaja decided to have resort to the Guru. 'Let the Guru decide for us,' said he. He went to the sacred temple and prayed for guidance. Then he took two slips of paper. He had the name of Lord Lake written on one of them and that of Hulkar on the other. He folded them several times and placed them before Guru Granth Sahib. Then he prayed, 'O Satguru, guide me. Give me your orders. Whose request I should accept? Which side I should support?' Then he picked up one of the slips. It bore the name of Lord Lake.

So the Guru had decided for him. He refused to get involved in the Anglo-Maratha conflict. He decided to mediate for a settlement between the two. He was successful. Hulkar departed in peace and in high spirits.

( v )

Maharaja Ranjit Singh was gifted with another excellent unique trait of character. It was, no doubt, a product of his humility. He had so thoroughly imbibed the

Sikh spirit of democracy, that he never claimed any superiority for himself. He used to say that the kingdom really belonged to the Guru; that he was only its watchman. He ever remembered Guru Nanak's words—'*bhullan ander sabh ko, abhulla Guru Kartar*—Everyone is liable to err, only the Creator is infallible.' Consequently, he was ever ready and willing to admit his error. He was ever open to correction and conviction.

Something still more rare and unprecedented or unparalleled ! In his book entitled *Real Ranjit Singh*, Fakir Sayed Waheed-ud-Din has reproduced, in a facsimile, two of the Maharaja's farmans in which he had authorised two of his subordinate officers, Fakir Sayed Nur-ud-Din and Sardar Amir Singh of Lahore to withhold and bring to his notice for amendment, any order of the Maharaja himself, of the princes royal, of the Prime Minister, or of the Chief Sardars of, in the opinion of the Syed or the Sardar, the order was inappropriate. Surely, nowhere else in the history of the world one can find an order of this nature, issued by an absolute monarch, authorising a subordinate officer of the state to withhold any order issued by the king himself, if, in the opinion of that officer, it appeared to be inappropriate, was there ever in the world another king so willing to bow before his subordinate officers' opinion ?

THE PANJAB RENDERED  
A WIDOW

( i )

SUPREME SACRIFICE

In the summer of 1817, Maharaja Ranjit Singh went on a hunting expedition. He spent the whole day on horse-back in chasing game. He felt extremely hot. On returning to the camp, he took copious draughts of ice-cold water and then jumped into a tank of cold water. He caught a severe chill. It was followed by a high fever. He was brought back to Lahore in a palanquin. There his condition took a serious turn for the worse. It was feared that he would die. The doctors pronounced his case as hopeless.

This pronouncement shook to the core one of his Sardars, Nihal Singh Atariwala. He resolved to sacrifice his own life and save the Maharaja's life. It occurred to him how Babar had gone round the bed of his sick son and prayed that his son's illness and fate be passed on to him, and his own life given to his son. Nihal Singh Atariwala resolved to follow that example. Accordingly, he went round the Maharaja's bed three times and prayed that the Maharaja's life be spared and his taken instead thereof.

His prayer was accepted. The Maharaja's condition began to improve. Nihal Singh Atariwala became ill. After a few days, the Maharaja was fully recovered and Nihal Singh was dead.

( ii )

### STRUGGLE WITH DEATH

About eighteen years went by since Nihal Singh Atariwala had made the supreme sacrifice. In August 1835, the Maharaja fell seriously ill again. This time also he caught a chill under somewhat similar circumstances as in 1817. He had a stroke of paralysis from which he recovered gradually.

Early in 1837, he had a second and more serious stroke of paralysis. His whole right side was affected. Its effects lasted for nearly six months.

The third stroke, from which he could not recover, was brought about by the strain of festivities at Ferozepur in honour of Lord Auckland's visit. On the eve of the Christmas of 1838, the Maharaja was taken violently ill. For the next five days he hovered between life and death. But by the New Year, he was a bit better and was taken to Lahore. The stroke completely deprived him of his power of speech. He had to communicate by signs.

By February 1839, his health improved a bit. He went to Amritsar to pray for his health. He gave away large sums for charity. He made rich offerings at the shrines of Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs. There was a little improvement, but his condition continued to cause anxiety.

The winter passed into summer. The summer's heat made the Maharaja more restless than ever before. By the end of May, he had no doubt in his mind that his days were numbered. Prayers for his recovery were held in mosques, temples and gurdwaras. Ten maunds of bread was distributed to the poor every day. Large numbers of cows, horses and elephants, and large quantities of gold and silver were given away to holy men and shrines.

But neither prayers nor charities helped the ailing Maharaja. No Nihal Singh Atariwala was there to take over the Maharaja's illness and death with his devotion and sincere prayers. Soon, he developed palpitation of the heart. The end did not seem far off. Early in the morning of June 20, 1839, he was once again seized with fever. He had a discharge of blood from the nose. On the advice of Fakir Azizuddin, the Maharaja entrusted the government to Prince Khark Singh with Raja Dhian Singh Dogra as his Chief Minister. He made the latter take a vow that he would remain faithful to Khark Singh and his son, Prince Naunihal Singh, and work for the best welfare of the State.

The Maharaja's condition went on getting worse and worse. He was now sure that he was dying. His last act was that of a dying soldier. He summoned his courtiers to his bed-side. He gave away to them swords, shields, lances, pistols, and matchlocks with his own hands. The courtiers wept bitterly and loudly as they took the gifts. The Maharaja tried to console them, but he himself broke down many times.



Raja Dina Nath  
Finance Minister

On June 26, he became unconscious. All hopes of recovery were given up. Orders were given for the preparation of a magnificent costly bier. He regained consciousness for a few minutes.

But the end came on the evening of June 27, 1839, corresponding to Asar 15, 1896\*. When this became known, the *Ranis*, Prince Khark Singh, Raja Dhian Singh and others 'raised their voices in lamentation, tearing their hair, casting earth on their heads, throwing themselves on the ground, and striking their heads against walls and stones. This continued during the night by the side of the corpse. Every now and then, looking towards the corpse, they made their shrieks louder and shriller.'

The Maharaja's body lay in state, with oil lamps burning on all sides. The wailing and lamentation went on throughout the night. Raja Dhian Singh was louder than others in lamentation and wailing. He announced his intention to burn himself on the Maharaja's funeral pyre. Prince Khark Singh and the principal Sardars placed their turbans on his feet and begged him to change his mind. They succeeded. He changed his mind.

Four *ranis* and their seven maid servants also announced their intention to burn themselves on the Maharaja's pyre and become *Satis*. All efforts to dissuade them proved ineffective. Rani Guddan, (Rani Mehtab Devi) daughter of Raja Sansar Chand Katoch

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\*By a curious coincidence, it was just on this day (Asar 15) exactly forty years earlier, that he had entered Lahore as a victor, i.e. on Asar 15, 1856.

was one of the four *ranis* bent upon becoming *Satis*. She thought it to be the most opportune time to get an oath of loyalty to the State from Raja Dhian Singh. She took his hand, placed it on the dead Maharaja's chest and made him swear that he would not betray Maharaja Khark Singh or his son, Prince Naunihal Singh. She also made him swear that he would work for the best welfare and integrity of the State. Similarly, she made Maharaja Khark Singh swear that he would trust Raja Dhian Singh. She added, 'The torments of hell due for the slaughter of a thousand cows will be visited on him who breaks this oath.'

The next morning, the Maharaja's body was placed on a sandalwood bier. It was taken in a procession through the streets of Lahore full of mourning crowds. It came to the garden at the foot of the fort-wall, near the temple Dehra Sahib marking the site of Guru Arjan Dev's martyrdom. The body was placed on the funeral pile of sandalwood. Rani Guddan sat near the corpse and placed the head of the deceased on her lap. The other ranis with seven maid servants seated themselves around the corpse, with every mark of satisfaction on their countenances.

The last prayers were said by members of all communities—Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. The prayers lasted nearly an hour. Then late Maharaja Khark Singh set fire to the pyre. The Maharaja of the Panjab, with four *ranis* and seven maid-servants, was reduced to ashes. As the pyre was burning, a pair of pigeons came flying fast and plunged headlong into the flames. They, too, became *Satis*.

Raja Dhian Singh Dogra attempted four times to jump into the burning pyre, but was held back by the multitude and his brothers.

'A few drops of rain from the gathering clouds fell upon the raging fire; but as it quickly stopped, the whole crowd that had assembled attempted to jump into the fire, but were with difficulty prevented from doing so.'

The Maharaja's death plunged the whole country into intense grief. Everyone felt as if he had lost his own father and guardian. With his death, it was said everywhere, the Panjab had become a widow.

'Although Maharaja Ranjit Singh is no more, and his dust returned to dust over a century ago, yet he lives in the memory of the people, and in the songs of the youth and maidens of the country as a maker of the Panjab and as a National Hero of the Land of Five Rivers.'



# Stories from SIKH HISTORY

## Book-VII



# Hemkunt



**STORIES FROM  
SIKH HISTORY**

**BOOK —VII**  
**(Maharaja Ranjit Singh & thereafter)**

**Kartar Singh  
Gurdial Singh Dhillon**

**Edited by  
P. M. Macormack**



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- Book VI (Banda Singh Bahadur)**
- Book VII (Maharaja Ranjit Singh and thereafter)**

## Foreword

Moral and religious instruction, I am glad to find, is now being rehabilitated in our schools. Our country is secular, it is true, but there is no denying the fact that religious and moral education has a very useful function to serve.

Modern psychology has emphasized that, if the child is given proper guidance at his formative stages, it will greatly help integrate his personality. The example of the teacher and his relations with students leave a deep impression on the minds of students. Moral instruction, I feel, is better given by example than by precept.

The great figures of the past, specially the heroes of history, have shown mankind how to fight successfully against evil and face the challenges, from time to time.

In this book are told stories about Ranjit Singh, Maharaja of the Punjab. He did for India and Indians in general, and for the Punjab and Punjabis in particular, something unique. He freed his country-men from centuries old slavery of fierce, fanatic, foreign rule. Thereby, he enabled his countrymen to hold their heads high with pride and selfrespect. He established a secular and national state in which all communities were equal partners. He did something by virtue of which he endeared himself to all sections of the people, and came to be regarded by all Punjabis as their friend, liberator and protector.

From the status of a petty chieftain, he rose to the position of the most powerful Indian ruler of his time, whose kingdom extended from Kashmir in the north to Sindh in the south and from river Sutlej in the east to Khaibar in the north west. For centuries the Afghans and Pathans had become a terror to Indians, particularly to Punjabis who had to be the first vic-

times of their raids and invasions. But Maharaja Ranjit Singh turned the tables on them, so that the Punjabis became a source of dread and terror to the erstwhile Afghans and Pathans.

He made all Punjabis feel the urge of Punjabi nationalism, and regard themselves as Punjabis first, and Hindus, Muslims, or Sikhs afterwards. As a result, his Sikh and Hindu troops subdued the Sikh and Hindu chieftains of the Punjab. His Muslim soldiers rejected the appeals to their Indian, Pathan, and Afghan co-religionists to crusade against the 'infidel', as they called the Maharaja of the Punjab. Instead of crusading against him, they helped him to liquidate the crusaders. All Punjabis were happy and prosperous under him.

After the death of Ranjit Singh the story of the Sikhs have been retold briefly in a very simple style covering the period up to 1989.

It is hoped that this series of Sikh history books will go a long way in moulding the lives of the young Indian students.

Gurdial Singh Dhillon

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## THE KINGDOM OF RANJIT SINGH

ENGLISH MILES

0 50 100 150 200

## Section - I

# Maharaja Ranjit Singh

### 1

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### FOREIGN INVASION

India had been subjected to foreign invasions from the earliest known times. The invaders came mainly from the north-west. They knew that India was rich. They also knew that it was disunited and weak; that its rulers were torn by mutual jealousies and enmities. Its people had no trace of nationalism or patriotism. It was, therefore, easy to conquer, subdue, and plunder this rich, unlucky land. Drawn by India's riches and beauty, and encouraged by prospects of easy victory, invader after invader came, and went back laden with untold booty.

The Punjab was the first Indian province in the invaders way. It was a sort of door-mat at India's gate. It was here that the invaders set foot first of all. These Muslim invaders from the North-west considered themselves to be soldiers of Islam, whose religious duty was , to loot, dishonour and massacre the infidels. Another set of these invaders came as crusaders who forced their religion on the conquered people. They founded kingdoms and began to rule over conquered land in accordance with the law of Islam. The Punjabis suffered far more than any others at the invaders' hands. Their rich lands

were laid waste. Their villages, towns, and cities were looted and burnt. The inhabitants were massacred most mercilessly. The women were dishonoured, raped and enslaved.

But the Punjabis went through all this hell and havoc as mute, helpless, impotent victims. They never thought of offering united opposition or resistance to the foreign invaders. They had no leader to inspire and prepare them for such a joint endeavour for the common good.

### ADVENT OF GURU NANAK

Such was the state of things in the Punjab when Guru Nanak made his debut there towards the end of the fifteenth century. He preached a new philosophy, a new way of life. He sought to totally transform the people's outlook and attitude towards life, society, and the world. He exhorted them to realize that God of the Muslims and the Hindus was one and the same God; that human beings were His children and, hence, members of one family. He tried to plant in the hearts of the Muslims and Hindus, love and regard for each other, so that they could learn to live together in peace and amity..

He wanted the people to realize that all who lived in the Punjab were one people, Punjabis ; that they did not become aliens or enemies by a mere change of or a difference in religion. He wanted them to realize that their interests were common. He aroused in them a strong sentiment of Punjabi nationalism.

In the community kitchens, run by Guru Nanak and his devotees, Hindus and Muslims, high-castes and low-castes and social out-castes, touchables and untouchables, all sat together, to partake of the food served free and freely to all. This made

them feel that they were one people.

In this way, they learnt a new lesson, that of co-existence, of unity amidst diversity. They came to realize that, though having different religious beliefs and rites, they were Punjabis all the same.

Thus Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, was also the founder of Punjabi nationalism. The sapling planted by him was watered, nourished, and shielded by his successors.

When Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Guru Nanak, decided to build the house of God, the Hari Mandar at Amritsar, he invited a prominent Muslim divine of Lahore, Hazrat Mian Mir, to lay its foundation stone. In the anthology of sacred writings the Granth Sahib—which he compiled side by side with the compositions of the Sikh Gurus—he included the works of both Muslim and Hindu saints. This was a great step towards making the people realize their oneness and common destiny.

Guru Arjan Dev was marvellously successful in bringing the two communities together. Both Hindus and Muslims in large numbers accepted his faith. This enraged Emperor Jahangir, who did not like Muslims to be drawn away to another religion. He ordered that Guru Arjan be arrested and ‘killed with torture.’ His orders were carried out most mercilessly as has been already told in Book II.

Guru Hargobind, the sixth Guru Nanak, raised an army to protect the infant community and to set it on the path which was to lead to its ultimate destiny. But he did not ignore secular legacy inherited by him. He continued to water, shield, and nourish the sapling of Punjabi nationalism, which Guru Nanak had planted in the Punjabis’ hearts. He recruited his

soldiers without any distinction of creed or community. He had a large number of Muslims among his trusted soldiers and friends. He built mosques for them. They enjoyed full freedom of worship and prayer. Thus they were practising the art of co-existence, of maintaining unity amidst diversity.

Guru Hargobind had to fight three defensive battles against Mughal armies. His Muslim soldiers fought zealously against their co-religionists. That was a practical demonstration of their having imbibed the spirit of the Sikh Gurus' teachings.

When some time later, Jahangir, the murderer of Guru Hargobind's father, offered him his hand of friendship, he accepted it quite readily. He did so because he would not miss any chance or opportunity of weeding out enmity and hatred, and fostering love and amity among all.

Acting most vigorously on Jahangir's religious policy, Aurangzeb ordered the execution of Guru Teg Bahadur. Guru Gobind Singh, Guru Teg Bahadur's son and successor, continued to follow his predecessors' policy of love and friendship for all and hate or enmity for none. He did not let the Sikh movement become anti-Islamic or anti-Muslim. He continued to lay emphasis on the brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God. He had a large number of Muslim admirers, followers, and friends. He had a large number of Muslim soldiers in his army. They never showed even the slightest hesitation in fighting his battles against their co-religionists. They came to his help in all crises, and never left him in the lurch.

He continued to act as the friend to men and foe to all tyrants. He continued to water, shield, and nourish the sapling of Punjabi nationalism planted in the Punjabis' hearts by Guru

Nanak. He toiled all his life to forge a united front against the fanatic foreign oppressors and to make the land equally safe for the followers of all faiths and creeds.

Under Guru Gobind Singh, the Sikhs had become a distinct and separate community. They had their own script, scripture, traditions, aspirations, and places of worship and gathering. Spurred on by their Guru's inspiring teachings and example, they continued to resist and fight the Mughal tyranny. They became the spearhead of a resistance movement against the fanatic foreign Mughals' tyrannical rule. For many years after the death of Guru Gobind Singh, a strong storm of religious hate and intolerance blew across the Punjab. The two main communities of the Punjab were actually at daggers drawn towards each other. Yet the spark of nationalism that had been lit by Guru Nanak and fed by his successors, was not extinguished.

### THE ARMED STRUGGLE

The armed struggle against the Muslims' tyranny initiated and actively conducted by Guru Gobind Singh, was carried on by his followers. The first success won by Sikh arms occurred in 1709 A.D. With an army of untrained and ill-equipped Punjabi peasants, Baba Banda Singh Bahadur defeated the well-trained, well-equipped and far stronger Mughal armies. He occupied a large portion of the eastern Punjab. He became the first Sikh ruler with his own capital, fort, and coin. He upheld and followed his Gurus' secular policy. All sections of the people got equal justice and protection. They felt that they were being ruled by sons of their own soil and not by foreigners, as before.

But his success was short lived. He was martyred in

Delhi in 1716 A.D. Still, he virtually succeeded in destroying the Muslim ruling class. What is worth remembering is, that though he fought against the tyrannical Muslim rulers and was treated by them with ferocious cruelty, yet he entertained no hate against the Muslims as such. His last words, when his flesh was being torn with red-hot pincers, were - 'God sent me to punish the corrupt and wicked people who had strayed away from the path of equity and were committing all kinds of excesses. Now that the task has been done, He has given power to men like my tormentors here to put an end to my life. I am being recalled by Him who sent me hither. All happens as He wills . I have no regrets. I bow to His Will.'

### PERSECUTION OF THE SIKHS

The fall of Baba Banda Singh and the destruction of his army was followed by a period of ruthless repression of the Sikhs. The Mughal governors of the Punjab boasted that they would destroy and finish off the Sikhs. Thousands and thousands of them were murdered most mercilessly. Prices were put on their heads. The governor of the Punjab made massacre of the Sikhs a pastime.

For a time, the Sikhs disappeared as a political force from the Punjab. They fled to the hills, jungles, and the sandy deserts of Rajputana. For eight years (from 1716 to 1724 A.D.), the Sikhs suffered silently. They took no active, effective step against their persecutors. But then they began to make their appearance again in the plains of the Punjab. They organised themselves in small bands and began, once more, to harass the government by their plundering expeditions and guerilla war-fare. They punished the traitors who had betrayed their brethren to the government. They also punished the petty tyrants who had, like mean cowards, harmed their unprotected

women and children. They also punished such corrupt officials and *zamindars* who oppressed the people. In particular, they fell upon and looted government parties carrying government treasure. They inflicted defeats on the Mughal armies sent against them from Lahore. Indeed, they made it very hot for the government of the Punjab and its supporters. It has to be remembered that all their activities were directed against the Mughal authorities. The people in general were not touched. They were even helped against their corrupt officials and powerful, troublesome neighbours. This made them popular with the people-Hindus as well as Muslims. The people began to look upon the Sikhs as brother-Punjabis, towards whom they could look for effective help in times of trouble and need.

This story of persecution, on the one side, and revenge, on the other, went on for some years. By then the government felt tired of this method of dealing with the Sikhs. It decided to try the method of conciliation. They were given a handsome *jagir*-rent free property- and the title of '*Nawab*' was conferred on their leader Kapur Singh. This was in 1738 A.D.

There was thus a sort of peace between the government and the Sikhs. The later utilized this time for strengthening their organization. In 1734 they re-organized their forces into (1) the Buddha Dal, the Army of Elders, and (2) the Taruna Dal, the Army of the Young. Both the Dals were supervised and kept together by Nawab Kapur Singh, who was highly respected, both as a secular and a spiritual leader. This reorganization helped them to carry on their struggle against the cruel fanatic Mughal tyrants with greater effect and success. They organized fresh campaigns. They spread themselves into the Bari Doab and went up to Hansi and Hissar.

Consequently the government stopped the *jagir*. It began once more to persecute the Sikhs. It occupied the Temple of Amritsar. Moving columns were sent to capture and kill the Sikhs. It was made criminal for anyone to give shelter to Sikhs or to help them in any way.

Thousands and thousands were killed in this way. There were also a number of cold-blooded executions so memorable that they entered the Sikhs' daily prayer. One such was the martyrdom of Bhai Mani Singh, the most learned and respected leader of the time. This occurred in 1738 A.D.

As a result of these renewed persecutions, most of the Sikhs again left the plains, and sought shelter in the Shivalik hills, the Lakhis jungle, and the sandy deserts of Rajputana. But, on occasions, they would come out of their hiding places and make their presence felt. One such occasion was Nadir Shah's invasion of India.

Nadir Shah invaded India in 1739. To reach Delhi he passed through the Punjab. He laid waste the whole countryside. He plundered Delhi. There he massacred in cold blood over one lakh (100000) men, women, and children. On his return journey he rounded up thousands of men and women, Hindus as well as Muslims. He meant to carry them off as slaves. The Sikhs came to know of this. They came out of their hide-outs and fell upon the rear of Nadir's Army. They carried away a good part of the booty which he had got by plundering Delhi. They also released a large number of their countrymen from Nadir's captivity. Their conduct during Nadir Shah's invasion made them very popular with the Punjabi people. Even the Muslim peasantry of the Punjab began once again to look upon them as their friends and brother Punjabis. On reaching Lahore, Nadir Shah questioned the

Governor, Zakriya Khan, about the 'mischief-makers' who had dared to attack his army's rear. He was told, 'They are a group of *fakirs* who visit their Guru's tank twice a year, and after bathing in it, disappear.' 'Where do they live?' asked Nadir Shah. 'Their homes are their saddles', he was told. Thereupon, Nadir Shah said, 'Take care, the day is not distant when these rebels will take possession of your country.'

This remark of the foreign invader hinted at Zakriya Khan's incapacity to deal with the Sikhs. It cut him to the quick. He decided to launch an all-out campaign against them.

Stricter orders were issued to local officials to finish off the Sikhs. Prices were again fixed on their heads. Rewards were offered for their capture and destruction. The whole machinery of the government was put into motion to crush them. Even the non-official *zamindars* were made to lend a hand in this genocidal campaign.

This relentless, all out campaign against the Sikhs went on for about eight years. Most of the Sikhs again took shelter in the hills, jungles, and the sandy deserts of Rajputana. During this period occurred the martyrdoms of some of the noblest, holiest, and most revered Sikh leaders, like Bhai Mehtab Singh, Bhai Taru Singh, Baba Bota Singh, Sardar Subeg Singh, and Sardar Shahbaz Singh. During this period occurred also the whole-sale massacre of the Sikhs in cold blood called the *Chhota Ghalughara*, the first or lesser holocaust. More than ten thousand Sikhs-men, women, and children-were killed.

The opportunity to redress the wrongs they had suffered was offered to them by the invasions of Ahmed Shah Durrani (or Abdali). The first of his nine invasions occurred in 1748.

His invasions disorganized the administrative machinery of the Punjab. This gave the Sikhs a chance to come out of their hide-outs. It was during the period of these invasions that the Sikhs rose to power. Each time the Durrani came, they retreated into the jungles, hills and deserts. But as soon as he turned back homewards, they fell upon him and harassed and harried him all the way up to the Indus. They took away most of the loot he was carrying home. They also released the thousands of men and women whom he was carrying off as slaves. He did his worst to finish off the Sikhs. In what is called *Waddha Ghalughara* or the Great Holocaust, he killed ten to twelve thousand Sikh warriors and eighteen to twenty thousand Sikh women and children. But all this destruction failed to curb, demoralize or suppress the Sikhs. They continued their struggles with still greater zeal and vigour.

### RISE OF THE SIKHS

By organizing resistance against the Durrani invader, the Sikhs were able to seize power. In 1748 Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia was chosen the supreme commander of the Dal Khalsa. The Dal Khalsa was, at the same time, re-organized and declared to be a state. It was divided into eleven *misals* each with its own leader. (There was also the twelfth *misal* called the Phulkia. But it was not a part of the Dal Khalsa and did not participate in their struggle against the Durrani or the Mughals). All the eleven *misals* were to be under the over-all command of the supreme commander. The *misals* occupied more and more territory. Lahore was occupied in 1765. They divided most of the Punjab among themselves. They also developed a system called *Rakhi*. They undertook to defend the people in their respective zones on payment of protection tax called *Rakhi*. In due course the *misaldars* became petty barons, and their *misals* became their private armies.

Of the eleven *misals* four deserve notice. The most powerful were the Bhangis. They were in possession of Lahore, Amritsar, and most of the Western Punjab. The next in importance were the Kanhayas who held the Himalayan foothills. The Ahlualias were masters of the land between the Ravi and the Beas. The Sukarchakias were among the lesser important *misals*. They were in possession of only the town of Gujranwala and the neighbouring villages.

The system of *misals* was a make-shift arrangement. It was suited to the challenge of the foreign invasions. But it did not provide a well organized or efficient administration of the Punjab as a whole. If the Punjab was to survive and prosper as a province, it was essential that it should be united and made strong. This could be done only if one of the *misals* could subdue and absorb the others. The contest for supremacy was therefore between the above said four main *misals*.

So, the need of the time was a strong and wise *misaldar* who could subdue the other *misals* and absorb them into his own. Such a one appeared in the person of Ranjit Singh Sukarchakia. Of him we shall read in the following pages.



Maharaja Ranjit Singh

## 2

## BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

Most Muslim rulers and officials of those days were cruel despots. To oppress their non-Muslim subjects was considered by them to be their right as rulers, and their duty as followers of the Prophet of Islam. Their treatment of the people, as a whole, was despotic, oppressive, and cruel.

Pir Muhammad Khan Chattha, head of the Chattha tribe living along the Jehlam, and chief of Rasulpur, was no exception. He treated his subjects, specially the Hindus, with utmost cruelty. No woman's honour was safe in his territory. Life and property were equally unsafe under him. His agents and subordinates vied with one another in exhibiting their daring and power in maltreating the people.

Complaints against the Chatthas' excesses and atrocities reached Mahan Singh Sukarchakia. He was pained to hear these harrowing complaints. He said to himself, 'As a Sikh of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh, it is my duty to punish the wicked and to rescue the victims of the Chatthas' brutality.'

He consulted his friends and associates. They all concurred

with him. They expressed their readiness to risk their lives in this noble adventure. Preparations for the campaign were begun at once. In due course he set off towards Rasulnagar with an army of six thousand horsemen. All of them were determined to win or die, but never to run away. Pir Muhammad Khan Chattha and his associates heard of Mahan Singh's coming attack. They shut themselves in the fort. Mahan Singh besieged the fort and the city. After a few months' struggle, the fort and the city were conquered. They became Mahan Singh's possessions. The Chatthas were adequately punished. Rasulnagar was renamed Ram Nagar.

After his victories against the Chatthas, Mahan Singh started homewards. Soon a despatch-rider arrived from Gujranwala. Jumping down from his horse, he bowed and said to Mahan Singh, 'Congratulations Sir ! God has blessed you with a son. He has been named Budh Singh, after your great ancestor.'

On hearing the good news, Mahan Singh called a halt. Joyous cries of *Sat Sri Akal* were raised by the whole victorious army. Mahan Singh thanked God and said, 'The two boons- a great victory and a son have been granted to me at the same time. The new born comes as a bringer of victory. He shall be called Ranjit Singh -which means Victor of Battles. I am sure more victories will come to me. He, too, will be a

great victor. He will win many battles.'

So Ranjit Singh, was born in Gujranwala on November 2, 1780. He was the only son of Mahan Singh Sukarchakia. His mother's name was Raj Kaur. During his early childhood he had a virulent attack of small-pox. He survived the attack; but it deprived him of his left eye and deeply pitted his otherwise handsome face. He was thus somewhat disfigured. No one, not even the wildest day dreamer, could have then dreamt that this frail, disfigured child was destined to be a great man; that he would, one day, become master of the Punjab and of the Punjabis' hearts; that he would inspire terror in the hearts of those terrible people who had so often invaded, plundered and layed waste this rich and beautiful land of five rivers; that he would be universally acclaimed the 'Lion of the Punjab'.

Mahan Singh made due arrangement for his only son's education and training. He knew quite well the nature of the task which the child would have to undertake in the years to come. He wanted to prepare him for that task. A learned, pious Sikh, named Bhai Bhag Singh, was chosen to be his teacher. He was to teach him Gurmukhi, to impart him instructions in the principles of the Sikh faith, and to acquaint him with the history of the Punjab and the Sikhs. The teacher did his task very well, indeed. As a result of his instructions, Ranjit Singh developed deep and abiding reverence for the Sikh Gurus and their teachings. He acquired the habit of beginning his day with prayers before Guru Granth Sahib and hearing recitations therefrom. He was imbued with the spirit of Punjabi nationalism, which had been founded by Guru Nanak, fostered by his nine successors, and exemplified in life by the great Sikh heroes. Even at that early age, he began to cherish a longing to be a friend and helper of Punjabis, to toil, and even die, if need be for the Punjab.

His military training was entrusted to a capable Sikh scholar-soldier, named Pandit Amir Singh. He trained him in the art of using weapons of offence and defence, particularly in wielding the sword. He would usually take him out into the neighbouring jungle and engage him in riding and hunting. As much of his time was spent in chase, he learned to ride and shoot well. He became an excellent horseman and unmatchable swordsman. In fact, later on, he came to be probably the best rider and swordsman of his time in India. Even at that early age he became a tireless rider. He could remain the whole day in the saddle, without showing any signs of fatigue. He exhibited this quality many a time in later life. Indeed, he needed it and used it quite often. For example, when he heard of General Hari Singh Nalwa's death in action at Peshawar, he hastened to that place on horse back. He rode in one day from Lahore to Jehlam, a distance of over one hundred and sixty kilometres.

He also exhibited his excellence as a swordsman a number of times. For example, when he met the British Governor General, Bentinck, at Ropar in 1831, he personally competed with the best of the English horsemen in tent-pegin and swordsmanship. None could equal him. All acknowledged his superiority. He exhibited also a rare feat of his skill as a swordsman. A trooper of his held a lemon on his outstretched palm. Ranjit Singh came riding at full gallop, and, cut the lemon with his sword, without injuring the trooper. No one else was able to perform this feat.

He had to make use of his skill many a time on the battlefield. With a swift stroke of his sword, he would sever the head of his adversary and make it roll in dust. All this was a result of the excellent training that he received in his early days.

## 3

## HIS ANCESTORS

From his very early life Ranjit Singh had an insatiable hunger for information and knowledge. He asked all sorts of questions from his teachers and others whom he met.

One day he said to his teacher, Bhai Bhag Singh, 'You have told me much about our Gurus, their teachings, their activities, and so on. You have given me a good deal of inspiring information about the great Sikh martyrs and the sublime manner in which they bore unheard of, unbearable tortures, and resolutely refused to give up their faith. I have learnt much about the great heroes of our race, like Baba Banda Singh Bahadur, Nawab Kapur Singh, and Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. But I have yet to hear about my own immediate ancestors, whose blood runs in my veins. Do please enlighten me about them. Will you, dear Bhaiji ?'

'Most readily and gladly,' replied Bhai Bhag Singh. 'I am delighted to hear what you have said. Well, listen. As, of course, you know, your family is called the Sukarchakia family, and your father is now the head of the Sukarchakia Misal.'

Ranjit Singh Asked 'Why are we called Sukarchakias ?' How did we acquire that name ? We live in Gujranwala and should be called Gujranwalias, I deem.'

Bhai Bhag Singh continued 'I shall tell you that presently. Your ancestors were humble peasants living in vil-

laces around Gujranwala. One of those villages was named Sukarchak. How your family came to be named after that village will be told later.'

'Well, as I said, your ancestors were humble peasants. They were sturdy, strong , and industrious workers. They earned a meagre living as farmers and raisers of cattle. The first in your family to win prominence was one named Sardar Budh Singh.'

'How ? What did he do to achieve prominence ?' Asked Ranjit Singh

'I shall tell you that presently. Sardar Budh Singh was your father's grandfather, that is, your great grandfather. He had the honour and privilege of having been baptized by Guru Gobind Singh himself.

Ranjit Singh exclaimed, "How lucky he was! what would not I give to drink the Amrit from the tenth Master's own hands ! But go on."

'He heard from the Guru's own lips what qualities of mind and heart his saint - soldiers, the Khalsa, should possess; how they should live and act as friends of men, foes of all tyrants.'

'That means that he explained the Khalsa *Rehat* or rules of conduct for his Khalsa. You have told me so well and so often what the Rules are. But to have heard them from the Guru's own lips ! But please go on.'

Bhag Singh continued, 'Sardar Budh Singh had a strong, swift-limbed, and beautiful piebald mare named Desan. It be-

came as well-known as its rider. Their feats of endurance became the talk of the people far and near. They travelled the plains of the Punjab and swam its broad rivers in flood as many as fifty times. Being inseparable, the mare and its master came to be known jointly as Desan Budh Singh. Sardar Budh Singh died in 1718, two years after Baba Banda Singh's martyrdom. It is believed that he took a worthy part in some of Baba Banda Singh's battles. He left his sons a few villages which they could call their own, and many others in the neighbourhood which paid them protection tax or *Rakhi*.'

The following day the teacher and his knowledge hungry pupil met again. The former continued his story of Ranjit Singh's ancestors as under:

'As I said, one of the villages inhabited by your ancestors was Sukarchak. Sardar Budh Singh's son, Sardar Naudh Singh, fortified that village. He engaged a body of Sikh horsemen to help him in his adventures. Together they came to be called Sukarchakias. They formed the Sukarchakia Misal. With this small band of warriors, Sardar Naudh Singh performed such noble and daring deeds that he came to be known and respected throughout the land, from the river Satluj to Rawalpindi. The Sukarchakias joined forces with other misals and fought several engagements with Ahmad Shah Abdali. Sardar Naudh Singh was able to win the regard and approbation of Nawab Kapur Singh, under whom he fought against the invader. As the Abdali retreated, the Sukarchakias took possession of parts of the land lying between the rivers Ravi and the Jehlam. Sardar Naudh Singh was killed in 1752, while fighting against the Afghans near Majitha, near Amritsar.

Declared Ranjit Singh : 'When I grow up, I shall avenge his death, I shall wreak vengeance on these damned

foreigners.'

'That is a mighty good resolve !' agreed Bhag Singh. 'May God grant you the strength to act up to it! You will be rendering a great and memorable service to your country and countrymen. But let me go on with my story'.

'To resume the story, your grandfather, Sardar Charat Singh, was the eldest of Sardar Naudh Singh's four sons. He became the head of the Sukarchakia family. He added to the number of his horsemen and, thereby, added to his strength. He made it a rule that all who would join his *misal*, must first be baptized.

'A good rule, no doubt' said Ranjit Singh'. 'I, too, shall adopt it.'

'That will be fine, indeed, and proper' Bhag Singh said approvingly'. Sardar Charat Singh then moved his headquarters from the village Sukarchak to Gujranwala. He erected battlements round the town. At that time he heard that the Imperial Faujdar of Eminabad was very cruel and fanatic; that he mercilessly oppressed and maltreated the people, particularly the Sikhs and Hindus. Sardar Charat Singh decided to punish the wicked evil-doer, and to rescue his victims. With a body of one hundred and fifty of his select horsemen, he raided Eminabad. He besieged the Faujdar's palace. He killed the cruel official in a hand-to-hand fight.'

'I am proud of his noble undertaking and his great soldierly feat'. Ranjit Singh said 'well, go on!'

'Your grandfather plundered the Faujdar's treasury and the imperial arsenal. He acquired large funds and hundreds of

good horses. This adventure won him much fame and popularity'.

'The Afghan Governor of Lahore heard of all these doings of Sardar Charat Singh. He came with a force to apprehend the brave Sukarchakia Sardar. But he was compelled by your grandfather to fly back to the capital. He left behind him his guns and stores of grain, to be appropriated by your grandfather ?'

'So my grandfather killed two birds with one stone' said Ranjit Singh. 'He routed the attacker and got ample rewards there of. He got victory and wealth'.

'Yes. But let me finish. Emboldened by this success, Sardar Charat Singh extended his domains by capturing the towns of Wazirabad, Ahmedabad, and Rohtas. Soon thereafter, Ahmad Shah Abdali once again came down from Afghanistan. Sardar Charat Singh adopted the usual tactics employed by the Sikhs in those days. He retreated to the jungles. Ahmad Shah plundered his estates. He also razed Gujranwala's fortifications to the ground. Soon, however, Sardar Charat Singh more than settled his account with the Afghans. He chased them on their return journey and plundered their baggage. He also freed a large number of women and girls who were being carried away as slaves. He rebuilt the battlements round Gujranwala and reoccupied the neighbouring country. He rehabilitated those who had been plundered and uprooted by the Afghans.

'Sardar Charat Singh's last action was at Jammu. He went there to help the rightful claimant to the *gaddi* (throne) of Jammu. There he fell mortally wounded by the bursting of his own matchlock or gun. That was in 1782.'

Ranjit Singh Said :‘That was, indeed, a very sad end of that mighty hero’.

Bhag Singh continued: ‘True, but God’s ways are strange and inscrutable. We have to bow before His Will. So did your father. But we shall talk about him tomorrow, if you please.’

On the following day, Bhai Bhag Singh continued his account.

‘Well, dear, your father was only ten when your grandfather breathed his last. He inherited his father’s daring and ambition. He married a daughter of Sardar Gajpat Singh, Chief of Jind. Thereby he strengthened his own position among the *misaldars*. He built a fort within the walled town of Gujranwala. He named it “Garhi Mahan Singh”. He increased the number of his horsemen to six thousand. Thus strengthened, he resumed the ancestral occupation of capturing territory and extending his domain.’

‘Soon complaints began to reach your father against the Afghan Governor of Rasulnagar, Pir Muhammad Khan. The latter was cruel, haughty, and bigoted. He oppressed and maltreated his subjects more mercilessly. Your father responded to the appeals of the oppressed people. He fell upon Rasulnagar and conquered it without much difficulty. He renamed it Ramnagar. Then he conquered Alipur, which was another stronghold of the haughty and much hated Chatthas. He renamed it Akal Garh’

‘Now I come to a most important event in your family’s history. Do you know, can you guess, what it was? No I shall

tell you. It was your birth. You were born when your father had gone westwards to chastise the Chatthas. You were named Budh Singh. A despatch rider was sent post-haste to inform your father. He was just returning from his victories against the Chatthas, when the despatch rider met him. Of course, not only your father, but also all his companions were filled with joy. Your father was told that you had been named Budh Singh. He said, "The boy is a bringer of victories. He shall be called Ranjit Singh which means Lion Victor of Battles. He will win many victories and great renown."

'That is how you got your name, my dear Ranjit Singh!'

'God permitting, I shall justify my father's choice of my name' declared Ranjit Singh. I shall try to act in such a manner as to prove his prophetic words to be true to the letter.'

Bhag Singh continued: 'After taking and renaming the Chattha strongholds of Rasulnagar and Alipur, your father took Pindi, Bhattian, Sahiwal, Isakhel and Sialkot. Then he proceeded to Jammu. He had an old score to settle with its Hindu Dogra ruler. The latter fled from the city. With the loot of Jammu, your father raised the Sukarchakias from a position of comparative obscurity to that of being one of the leading *misals*.'

'This angered Sardar Jai Singh Kanhaya. The Kanhayas were then the most powerful of the *misals*. Your father had to fight them. In one of the many battles between them and us, Sardar Jai Singh's son, Sardar Gurubakhsh Singh, was killed. The Kanhaya Chief's pride was humbled. At the suggestion of Sardarni Sada Kaur, Sardar Gurbakhsh Singh's widow, he agreed to engage his grand-daughter to you, our precious dear Lion Victor of Battles ! Two powerful *misals* have been united thereby. The union is sure to produce good results.'

'This brings the story of your brave illustrious ancestors to the present day. You now know as much as you need to know about those noble ones whose blood runs in your veins.'

'You have told the story well' said Ranjit Singh. I am grateful for it. I am sure God will permit me to follow their example. I have many ideas and dreams about what I would do. May God be my guide and helper!"

'I join you in that prayer'. Said Bhag Singh , May He permit me to witness your glorious achievements !'

## 4

## BOLD ADVENTURES OF A LAD

In 1791, Mahan Singh called up Sahib Singh Bhangi of Gujrat to pay the tribute due from him. On his refusal to comply, Mahan Singh decided to proceed to Gujrat for the purpose of realizing the tribute. Ranjit Singh, who was then a little over ten years of age, heard of his father's decision. He made up his mind to accompany his father in that campaign. So determined, he met his father, and said 'Dear father, I should like very much to go with you on this military campaign. Do please allow me to do so. I am eager to see and learn how such campaigns are conducted. I must get used to the demands that such campaigns make on one's body, mind and heart. I want so to equip myself that I may be fit to be helpful to you. I long to be initiated in the art of war as early as possible. Shall I go with you ?'

Mahan Singh said in reply, 'I like your idea. I agree with you that it is time for you to become experienced in military campaigns. Who knows how soon you may suddenly be called upon to step into my shoes. It is best to be prepared in time for all eventualities. You will go with me. Get ready. Choose the horse that you will ride. Select a band of best horsemen who will attend upon you as your bodyguards.'

Ranjit Singh was beside himself with joy. He thanked his father and said, 'When do we start?'

Mahan Singh said, As you know, an *akhandpath*

(continuous reading of Guru Granth Sahib) has been started this morning. On its completion, we shall offer prayers to the Almighty for success of our campaign. We shall start the next day, which is Wednesday.'

Mahan Singh started towards Gujrat as planned. Ranjit Singh accompanied him, riding his favourite horse, and followed by his bodyguards. He was going to have his first experience of a military campaign. Little did he know that he was accompanying his father not only for the first but also for the last time.

Sahib Singh Bhangi could not stand against Mahan Singh's mighty force. He left Gujrat and took refuge in the fort of Sodhran. At the same time, he sent an urgent appeal to his kinsmen at Lahore. He appealed to them to come to his help against the Sukarchakias.

Mahan Singh besieged the fort. The siege dragged on through the winter months. Now, as ill luck would have it, Mahan Singh was suddenly taken very ill. He had a severe attack of dysentery. The attack was so severe that he feared that he might not recover. Hence he formally invested Ranjit Singh as the head of the Sukarchakia misal. He did this by daubing the boy's forehead with saffron paste. Then he exhorted his followers to obey their young chief and always be faithful to him. Bidding farewell to his son and followers, Mahan Singh returned to Gujranwala, for rest and treatment.

The Bhangi Sardars of Lahore soon learnt of Mahan Singh's illness and his return from the siege. They also learnt that the Sukarchakias were in a precarious predicament. They were under the command of a ten year old lad. They felt confident that 'the lad of ten,' as they called Ranjit Singh, would not

be able to withstand them. They boastfully declared, 'We shall despatch the lad or bring him to Lahore, bound hand and foot. We shall crush and finish off the Sukarchakias and be masters of their lands.'

They hurried to the relief of Sodhran. Ranjit Singh soon learnt that the Bhangi force from Lahore was on its way to the besieged fort. Though a lad of less than eleven, he acted like a seasoned general. He went out to waylay that force lying in ambush in the jungle near Kot Maharaja, he waited for the Bhangis from Lahore as they were to pass that way. As they approached, Ranjit Singh fell upon them suddenly. They were taken completely by surprise. They were soon routed and put to flight. They left behind a large number of guns and cannon, besides a good deal of other war-materials. All this fell into Ranjit Singh's hands. He sent all of it to Gujranwala.

Needless to say that Mahan Singh was immensely pleased to see the guns, cannon, and other war materials captured by his son. He was glad to hear that his Ranjit had proved a victor in the very first battle that he had fought. This, he thought, augured well for the future.

But on the following day, Mahan Singh breathed his last. The sad event occurred in March 1792. Ranjit Singh heard the sad, heart-breaking news while at Kot Maharaja. Weighed down with sorrow, he hurried to Gujranwala. He was just able to get back in time for his father's funeral.

Ranjit Singh was a lad of less than eleven when his father died. He was too young to bother about the day-to-day management of his estate. That work was left to his father's manager, Lakhpat Rai. His mother, Raj Kaur, and his mother-in-law to be, Sada Kaur, jointly supervised and guided Lakhpat

Rai in managing the affairs of the Sukarchakias' estate.

Ranjit Singh spent much of his time in the chase. Engaged in that pastime, he had ample practice in riding and shooting. Thus he learnt to ride and shoot well. In these years he also developed a love for horses. This love, in later life, turned into a master passion.

As already said, his favourite pastime was hunting. One day, while hunting in the thick forest near Ramnagar, he rode off alone in pursuit of game. On that account, he became separated from his companions. A lad hardly yet in his teens, he was thus all alone in that dense forest.

It so happened that a Chattha chief named Hashmat Khan, was also hunting in the same forest. Now, this Chattha chief had suffered many humiliating defeats at the hands of Ranjit Singh's father. His estate had been taken possession of by that Sukarchakia Sardar. When he met with Ranjit Singh in that jungle, he decided to take revenge. He was confident that he would kill that 'lad of thirteen.' So determined, he fell upon Ranjit Singh. He made a sharp, sudden cut with his sword. Just when he did so, Ranjit Singh's horse took fright and reared. Thereby Hashmat Khan's first move failed. Before he could make a second move, Ranjit Singh pierced and transfixed him with his lance. He then cut off Hashmat Khan's head, impaled it on his spear, and rode back to his companions with that gory trophy.

His companions hailed him with joyous shouts of Sat Sri Akal, praised his power and daring, congratulated him on his wonderful bold achievement, but gently protested against his having risked his life in that manner. They ended by saying, 'In future we shall never leave you alone. If that villain had

succeeded, what would have been our fate !

Ranjit Singh spent another two years hunting in the dense jungle around Gujranwala. He took no interest in his estate. His mother became anxious for his future. She felt that marriage might bring him round to the responsibilities of life. She conferred with Sada Kaur. The two ladies fixed a date for his marriage. He was just over fifteen when he left Gujranwala for Batala, the chief town of the Kanhayas, to wed Sada Kaur's daughter, Mehtab Kaur. This alliance between the two important Sikh families was major event for the Punjab. All the leading Sikh chiefs were present at the wedding, which took place in 1796 A.D.

## 5

## TOWARDS A FREE PUNJAB

## DANGERS

In the 1790s the condition of the Punjab was far from happy and secure. A greater part of it was ruled by the Sikh *misals*. The *misaldars* were generally at daggers drawn with one another. The *misal* organization was, infact, no longer the united fraternity that it used to be some fifty years before. When Ahmad Shah Abdali had begun his invasions of India, the Sikh *misals* had fought as one under Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. But now they were woefully disunited. This disunity of the Sikhs rendered the Punjab weak and vulnerable. An invader from the north-west could easily have defeated the *misals*, one by one, and made the Punjab a part of his empire. If the Punjab was to be made free and powerful, this problem of disunity of the Sikhs had to be solved before it became too late.

Ranjit Singh was shrewd enough to realize the gravity and urgency of this problem. He was alive to the dangers to which this state of things exposed his dear Punjab, the land of the Sikh Gurus and of the innumerable Sikh martyrs. It was clear to him that the *misals* needed to be brought together under one strong and capable person. He felt that, God willing, he should be the one to do it. He decided to work towards achieving that goal.

But there was also another menace to the Punjab. There were some aliens, non-Punjabis, in the very heart of the Punjab, who wanted to take advantage of this disunity. There was the ruling Pathan family of Kasur. These Pathans had not become Punjabis at heart. Their loyalties were more to the land of their ancestors than to the Punjab. The rise of the Sikh *misals* had filled them with fears about their own safety. They felt that the rising Sikh power was a mortal menace to them. Each time that Ahmad Shah Abdali or his son, Taimur, had invaded India, the Pathans of Kasur had joined him in plundering their own neighbours. They wished, therefore, that the Afghans should invade the Punjab and make it a part of their empire. Their Chief, Nizamuddin Khan, hoped that by helping the invaders, he could secure *Subedari* (Governorship) of Lahore.

A still bigger menace to a free and powerful Punjab was the Afghans. Ever since the conquests of Ahmad Shah Abdali, the Afghans had looked upon northern India as a part of their empire. Abdali's attempts to treat and use it as a part of his empire had been largely foiled and frustrated by the Sikhs. His son and successor, Taimur, had kept up pretensions to northern India. But the best that he could do was to retain his hold on Kashmir and turn out the Bhangis from Multan. Taimur's son, Shah Zaman, was full of inordinate ambition. As soon as he succeeded his father, he announced his intention of re-establishing the Afghan Empire in India. Among the first to offer him all assistance and full co-operation was Nizamuddin of Kasur.

#### TO FIGHT OR FLEE?

Shah Zaman soon proved as good as his word. He invaded India in 1793. In this first invasion he came as far as

Hassan Abdal and then went back. In 1795 he came again. This time he re-took Hassan Abdal and captured Rohtas from the Sukarchakias. Ranjit Singh was thus the first Sikh Chief to suffer at Shah Zaman's hands.

The invader had, however, to hasten home in order to save his own country from an invasion from the west. As soon as he turned his back, Ranjit Singh expelled the Afghans from Rohtas.

Shah Zaman had not abandoned his ambitious intention. He came for the third time in November, 1796. He intended, as before to proceed to Delhi. He had a well-equipped army of over thirty thousand Afghans. He expected that a large number of Indians would join him. Among them was to be Nizamuddin of Kasur, who had been promised *Subedari* of Lahore. Shah Zaman also expected that Sahib Singh of Patiala would help him, in keeping with his family's tradition of loyalty to the Durranis.

As the news of Shah Zaman's invasion spread, people began to flee to the hills for safety. Most of the *misaldars* were among the first to decamp. By December, 1796, Shah Zaman had occupied the Punjab as far as the Jehlam. He was, of course, heading for Lahore. The territories of two Sikh Chiefs, namely Sahib Singh Bhangi at Gujarat and Ranjit Singh Sukarchakia, lay across the invader's route to Lahore. The former made an attempt to halt the invaders. But the odds against him were too heavy. The invaders were too many and too strongly armed for him and his horsemen. He had to give up the attempt and flee eastwards.

Ranjit Singh's turn was to come next. He could raise, at the most, five thousand undisciplined horsemen, armed with

only muskets and spears. The Afghans, on the other hand were over thirty thousand strong. They were equipped with heavy artillery and swivelguns mounted on camels. Evidently, the odds were too heavy against Ranjit Singh and his ill-equipped five thousand horsemen. Under the circumstances, he felt it would be suicidal for him to meet the invaders, all by himself.

He saw clearly that if the Afghans were to be checked, the Sikhs had to unite and face the invaders as one force. Otherwise they would be annihilated piecemeal, one by one. So concerted action was necessary. In order to come to a joint decision, Ranjit Singh decided to call a meeting of all the Sikh Chiefs or *Sarbat Khalsa* at Amritsar. That was the traditional Sikh way of meeting a common danger. So determined, he collected his family, and proceeded to Amritsar.

In compliance with the summons of the *Sarbat Khalsa*, many Sikh Chiefs assembled at Amritsar. The matter was discussed. Most of the chiefs were in favour of abandoning the plains and going into the hills for the time being. It was added, 'Let us advise and assist the people to do the same. No doubt, the Afghans will plunder our cities and towns. We shall settle accounts with them later. We shall harass them continually with our traditional hit-and-run-tactics. We shall thus make it too hot for them. They shall be forced to go back. We can follow them in order to see them off in our traditional way.'

The elderly Sahib Singh Bhangi was the chief spokesman for this point of view. He had an experience of the military might of the invaders. He pleaded that it would be impossible for them to fight and defeat the Afghans in pitched battles. Guerilla tactics, he added, would be more effective. Most of those present agreed with him.

## SADA KAUR'S BOLD STAND

The celebrated woman-warrior, Sada Kaur, was present in that meeting of the *Sarbat Khalsa*. She was there as the Chief of the Kanhyā *misal*. She was strongly opposed to this point of view. She had given vent to her feelings by uttering words of protest, now and then. When she saw that most of the Sikh Chiefs were inclined to show the white feather, she was deeply hurt and bitterly sad. She went up to her son -in-law, Ranjit Singh, and said to him, 'Do you see which way the wind blows here ? It is a matter of shame for us all to run away in this cowardly manner. Remember the great heroes of our race. Their souls as well as souls of our immediate heroic ancestors must be feeling sad and humiliated at our cowardice being manifested here. Let us not sully their names. Let us fight the invaders with all our might and wisdom, leaving the outcome in the hands of the Almighty. We should trust in Him and do the right. I want you not to flee but to stay behind and fight. I shall be with you. What have you to say to this, my dear Ranjit? I hope you will not forget what blood runs in your veins. Speak up, my son !'

Sada Kaur's words went straight to the brave young heart of Ranjit Singh, and stirred it to its utmost depths. He stood up and thus addressed the assembly, 'Brave Khalsa warriors, let us not be overcome by fear and despair. This brave respected lady by my side has shown me the right way, the right way for all of us. It is, no doubt, hard and beset with dangers, very great dangers. But what dangers can make Guru Gobind Singh's Khalsa swerve from the path of honour and glory ? Let us not forget what lessons he taught us, and what spirit he infused in us. When creating the Khalsa, he declared that a single Sikh of his would boldly and fearlessly face and

fight one and a quarter lakh (125000) and never show his back to the enemy. He also declared that he would make humble little sparrows chase and pluck mighty hawks. Shall we prove unworthy of the Guru's trust? Shall we run away from the invaders, without giving them a taste of our steel ? The tenth Master will turn his back on us, if we do so. Don't forget what treatment our brave ancestors, not long ago, gave to this invader's father and grandfather. Let us follow their example, come what may. I for one, weak and ill-equipped though I be, shall stay and fight, unmindful of the consequences. I, too, was wavering and slipping like most of you here, but this brave respected lady has saved and supported me. I thank her. All of you should thank her. She has saved me from going wrong. She wants to save you all from behaving in a manner unworthy of you. Wake up, Khalsaji. Let us unite to face the invaders. The wonderful Lord's is the Khalsa, and His the victory.'

Sada Kaur's and Ranjit Singh's stand turned the majority in their favour. They all agreed to back up Ranjit Singh. They chose him as the commander of the Khalsa forces. They all, including some grey-headed veterans of many battles, agreed to follow and obey this bold young man, who was hardly sixteen years of age, at that time.

So Ranjit Singh took command of the combined Sikh forces. At their head, he advanced towards Lahore. It had been occupied by Shah Zaman on January, 1, 1797. The advancing Sikh forces drove the Afghans and their Indian supporters out of the countryside. Later they, took shelter in the city. Every night the Sikh would attack some quarter of the city. After killing a number of Afghans, they would disappear into the darkness. The Afghans dared not come out and pursue the Sikhs. In fact, they were always full of fear and alarm, and longed to go back home. Shah Zaman was disillusioned and in

despair. He began to look for a face-saving excuse for giving up the campaign and going back to his country.

That excuse came at the end of January 1797. He heard that his brother, Mahmud, was organizing a rebellion in Afghanistan. He started homewards at once. He left General Shahanchi Khan with twelve thousand soldiers in Lahore. The Sikhs followed the retreating Shah all the way across the Jehlam, and relieved him of much of his baggage.

As the Sikhs were returning after having seen off Shah Zaman and his Afghans, Shahanchi Khan decided to take them by surprise and deal them a crushing blow. He fell upon them suddenly near Ramnagar. But he was speedily and completely defeated by the Khalsa forces led by Ranjit Singh.

Till then Ranjit Singh had been an obscure Sikh chieftain. But in that winter he came to be known as the hero of the Punjab.

Shah Zaman heard of his general Shahanchi Khan's defeat at Ramnagar. He felt humiliated. This sense of humiliation aroused his anger. He vowed vengeance against the Sikhs. As soon as he had settled his domestic problem, he once more started towards India. This was his fourth invasion. It occurred in the autumn of 1798.

As the news of the invasion spread, the people of the Punjab, mostly Hindus and Sikhs, began to leave their homes and seek safety in far off places. Most of them fled to the mountains. Indeed, there was panic in the whole Punjab. By October, 1798, all the big cities of the Punjab were deserted.

The Sikhs' sacred city of Amritsar was no exception. Even the sacred shrine there was left with only a handful of guards to protect it. Sahib Singh Bhangi evacuated Gujrat. The Afghans plundered the town and massacred its inhabitants. As the Hindus and Sikhs had left the city earlier, the victims were all Punjabi Muslims. The latter had hoped that the invaders, being their co-religionists, would do them no harm. Likewise Gujranwala was evacuated by Ranjit Singh. The town and its inhabitants, mostly Muslims, met the same fate.

Again a meeting of the Sarbat Khalsa was called at Amristar to decide what course of action should be adopted. Again, the majority of those present were for fleeing to the hills. They felt that the odds against them were too heavy, for regular pitched battles. They again advocated employment of their traditional hit-and-run tactics in order to harass and tire out the Afghans.

Again it was Sada Kaur, the lion-hearted woman warrior, who spiritedly opposed the majority's talk of 'too heavy odds and the traditional hit-and-run tactics.' She said, 'Khalsaji, you are again for adopting a course of action most unworthy of you. All these specious arguments are mere excuses. They are dictated by cowardice which has gripped your hearts. They are intended to camouflage your chicken-heartedness and lack of honour. As Guru Gobind Singh's Khalsa, it behoves you to dare and bear all dangers, and challenges, boldly and fearlessly, unmindful of what the outcome might be. To fly would be the height of timidity and lack of confidence in the Guru, God, and yourselves. Moreover, honour bids you to stay and fight the invaders. You have been taking protection tax or *rakhi* from the people. You are honourbound to protect them. To run away, leaving the people to the invaders' mercy, would be most dishonourable for you, my dear Khalsaji.'

'If all of you decide to show the white feather and run away, I will not join or follow you. I will stay back to brave all dangers. I am sure that a large number of the Guru's Sikhs will be ready to join me. I will lead them against the foreign invaders. Guru Gobind Singh's *Amrit* impels me to follow that course. I appeal to you, in the name of Guru Gobind Singh, in the name of our glorious heroes and martyrs and in the name of your brave ancestors to shake off all fear and weakness. Let us face and defeat the invaders. The Guru and God will be with us!'

At this Ranjit Singh stood up and said, 'I, for one, will stay and, with the help of such of my brethren as agree to cast their lots with me, fight the invaders, and protect the sacred city and shrine to my last breath.'

At this stage, Ranjit Singh's uncle, Dal Singh, stood up and said, 'Believe me, dear Khalsaji, the Afghans are not such good and formidable soldiers as they are taken to be. I say this from a little bit of experience. An armed Afghan caravan was carrying loads of fruit for Shah Zaman. I came to know of this. I made up my mind to have that fruit for myself. With only a handful of my brave companions, I fell upon the caravan, scattered them and took away the fruit as well as a lot of other useful materials. Shake off all fear. We can fight, frighten and put to flight the foreign invaders. The Guru and God will help us.'

After hearing Dal Singh's speech, all the assembled Sardars decided to stay and fight, and they said, 'Victory is the gift of God. Let us make a united effort to oppose and drive away the haughty Afghans.'

Ranjit Singh was again chosen to be the leader. He was

just eighteen years of age at that time.

### SHAH ZAMAN IN A FIX

Shah Zaman entered Lahore on November 27, 1798. Soon thereafter, he sent a strong detachment of select Afghan soldiers to attack Amritsar. Ranjit Singh was ready to receive them. He came eight kilometres out of the city to meet them. A severe battle ensued. It lasted over three hours. The Afghans were routed. They fled to Lahore. Ranjit Singh pursued the fleeing foreigners to the very gates of that city. Then he encircled the capital. He cut off the Afghan's supply-lines. He burnt the crops in the countryside around Lahore. The Afghans began to suffer for want of supplies.

The situation became very serious for them. They felt that unless they drove away the Sikhs, they would face want and starvation. So, they were forced to take the offensive. A stronger and bigger detachment of select Afghan soldiers under Nizamuddin of Kasur, was sent against the Sikhs. They attacked the latter at Shahdara on the other side of the Ravi near Lahore. The Sikhs proved too strong for the Afghans. They repulsed and routed the invaders. The Afghans suffered a heavy slaughter.

Another detachment of Afghans came from Lahore to help Nizamuddin. But by the time they had arrived, the Sikhs had disappeared. The Afghans wreaked vengeance for their defeat by attacking and plundering the local population which was entirely Muslim. The Sikhs had not molested them in any way whatsoever. But the foreigners did not show any sympathy or tenderness for their Punjabi co-religionists. Thus the Punjabi Muslims learnt a much needed lesson. They realised that their

co-Punjabi Sikh brethren were better worthy of their loyalty than their foreign co-religionists. This realization was a valuable step towards the making of a free, united and powerful Punjab:

The Afghans were in great terror. They dared not move out of the city to face the Sikhs in open battle. This made Ranjit Singh more daring. One day, accompanied by a small band of horsemen, he rode up to the Samman Burj of the Lahore fort. Shah Zaman was holding court there. Ranjit Singh fired a number of shots which killed some Afghans waiting upon the Shah. Then he shouted out, at the top of his voice, 'O grandson of Ahmad Shah, Charat Singh's grandson has come. Come out, and I challenge you for a duel.'

Shah Zaman heard the challenging shouts; but he dared not move. No Afghan had the courage to go out and meet Ranjit Singh and his small band of horsemen. After waiting for a short time, Ranjit Singh galloped away, shouting, 'Akal ! Akal !'

Shah Zaman was in a terrible fix. He had come with the intention of proceeding to Delhi. But he found himself confined in Lahore. It seemed impossible to pierce through the Sikh barricade and move on towards Delhi. He taunted his Afghan soldiers. He exhausted his eloquence in exhorting them to go out and boldly face and finish off the 'infidels.' But so great was the terror that Ranjit Singh and his companions had created in the Afghans' minds, that they merely shook their heads and refused to stir from their barracks.

#### SHAH ZAMAN'S DIPLOMACY

It was not long before Shah Zaman came to the disheart-

ening, dismal conclusion that it was impossible for him to exterminate the Sikhs. The *jehad* or holy war against the 'infidels' was proving a failure. He decided to give up fighting against them and instead to use diplomacy. Where the sword had failed, clever diplomacy might succeed. He concluded that if he could divide the Sikhs, break up their unity, he would be able, one day, to liquidate them, one by one. He thought, 'If they could be persuaded to regard me as their overlord or emperor, even in name, I can count them among those subservient to me. I can then say that their estates are a part of my empire.'

So thinking he sent his agents to Amritsar. They assured the Sikh Sardars that Shah Zaman had formed a very good opinion about them; that he had a great regard for them. 'He has decided', added they, 'to give up fighting against you. He wants to make friends with you. He says that he will not disturb your possessions. Keep what you have acquired. Give up fighting. Make peace. He wants to proceed to Delhi. He cannot do that so long as you are arrayed against him. So give up fighting. Tell us what you want. He will grant it, in order to win your goodwill and friendship,'

The Sikhs at once replied, 'We want nothing that the Shah can give us. All we want him to do is to return to his own country and leave us in peace in our land. Go and tell him that.'

The Shah's agents returned to Lahore. They informed him of their failure to rope in the Sikhs. But he was determined not to give up efforts at diplomacy. He said to his agents, 'Let us try another trick. Go and try to sow discord among the Sikh Sardars. Go to them, one by one. Make generous offers to every one of them, and hint that others are accepting the offers.

With soft, sweet and clever words, persuade them to agree to my proposal. Ask them to send their agents to me in order to acquaint me with what they want. Assure them, at the same time, that they will be given what they want. If we succeed in dividing these troublesome infidels, we can rule over them thereafter.'

This trick of his was more successful. Many Sardars were taken in. They sent their agents to Lahore. They were received with flattering attention and talked to in soft, honeyed words, Shah Zaman met each of them separately and said, 'Tell your master that I bestow on him the territory that he owns. He need pay me no tribute. Let him keep the land and use it as he likes. I shall not disturb him. I attach no conditions to this offer. He should not hesitate to accept it,'

So great was the Shah's success that even Ranjit Singh was persuaded to send his representative to the Shah. He was instructed to negotiate with him for the *Subedari* (governorship) of Lahore.

The Afghan diplomacy was thus successful in breaking up the Sikh unity. Each Sardar was eager to acquire from the Afghan invader as much as possible. So the Shah's policy of 'divide and rule' was going to succeed.

The hour, they say, produces the man to tackle it. Just when the Shah was exulting over his diplomatic success, a saviour appeared in the person of Baba Sahib Singh Bedi. He was an elderly man of great learning and piety. He was also a brave and dauntless warrior. Moreover, he was a descendant of Guru Nanak. Because of all this, he was highly respected by all Sikhs. He enjoyed the status of 'father of the Sikhs'. He was deeply pained to see this discord among the Sikh

Sardars. He felt that it would be ruinous for them, as well as for the whole Sikh community. He pleaded with the Sardars to stop all negotiations with the foreign invader. He exhorted them to bear in mind what havoc Shah Zaman's father and grandfather had caused in the country, to their community, to their sacred places and to their ancestors. He concluded by saying, 'It will be a matter of lasting shame for us to beg for gifts and favours from the Afghans. Our ancestors spurned the offers made by the foreign invaders. They refused to accept *subedari* of Lahore, when it was offered to them by Shah Zaman's grandfather, Ahmad Shah Abdali. Let us beware of the foreigner's tricks. Let us not be duped by him any further.'

The Sikh Sardars agreed to be guided by Baba Sahib Singh Bedi. They said, 'You are authorized to speak on our behalf. Give to the Shah's agents whatever reply you like and think proper. We shall stand by what you say'.

Shah Zaman's agents came again to continue and conclude the negotiations. Every Sardar told them to meet and talk to Baba Sahib Singh Bedi, 'He will speak for us,' they said 'We will accept what he agrees to accept.' The agents met the grand old man, stated their mission and urged him to advise the Sikhs to accept the Shah's generous offer.

He replied, 'We took the country with the sword and with sword shall we keep it. We need no gifts or grants from your master. The Khalsa will rule in their own right. Tell your master to clear off and leave us in peace. Or let him come out into the battlefield and taste a bit more of our steel.'

The Shah was sorely disappointed at the failure of his diplomatic move. He gave up his plan to win over the Sikhs. He yelled out, 'So, they don't want peace. They want war.'

They shall have it. I shall soon teach them such a lesson in war as they will never forget. They will rue the day when they rejected my generous offer.'

But it was an empty boast, as we find from a newswriter's report of the same day. It says, 'The Shah's camp is always in alarm on account of the Sikhs, who at night approach Lahore and keep up a fire of musketry. None dares to go out against them.'

Shah Zaman now heard that his brother, Mahmud, was again stirring up trouble in Afghanistan. The news offered a good, face-saving excuse to the Shah to return home. Before leaving, he proclaimed that, after setting matters with Mahmud, he would return, give the promised unforgettable lesson to the Sikhs, and conquer not only Punjab but also whole of India.

When the news of the Shah's departure reached Amritsar, the Sikh Sardars broke camp and hurried to their estates. Instead of hurrying to his estate Ranjit Singh set out in pursuit of the retreating invader. He caught up with the Afghan army's rear not far from Gujranwala. From there to the banks of the Jehlam he kept up a running fight. He took a heavy toll of the invaders' life and equipment. This pursuit led him to the banks of Indus.

All this made Ranjit Singh popular not only in the Punjab, but throughout India. He came to be regarded as the protector of the Sikh nation and saviour of the Punjab. It was generally believed that were it not for the fortitude and excellent conduct of Ranjit Singh, the whole of the Punjab would have become a desert waste.

Before leaving Shah Zaman had threatened to come again

as an invader and conqueror of India. He could not carry out that threat. He was deposed and blinded by his brother. In fact, his last invasion was the last invasion of India from the north-west. Thus the Punjab was cleared of the Afghans for ever. This was a very important step towards the making of a free and powerful Punjab.

## 6

## AMBITIOUS DREAMS

In due course, Ranjit Singh returned home, after having 'seen off' the invader, Shah Zaman beyond the Indus. His mother and mother-in-law were waiting for him with pride and affectionate eagerness. As he came in, each moved round his head a bag full of gold *Mohars* or coins, kissed him on the forehead, and called to her attendant, 'Take this bag, go out, and distribute its contents among the poor. Our Ranjit has come home after winning name, fame and glory. Tell them all to pray for him. Let all pray that his star may rise higher and brighter, day by day'.

Thanksgiving services were held in gurdwaras, temples and mosques. Gifts and food were given to the poor at large.

One day, Sada Kaur called him for confidential talk and said, 'My dear Ranjit, I have been indulging in charming dreams and making ambitious plans about you and the Punjab. As you see, the *Misals* are ever quarrelling among themselves. In this way they weaken one another. We are thus a house divided against itself. Shah Zaman has been driven out, no doubt. But before leaving, he threatened to come again with a stronger force. We, too, should make ourselves stronger, lest he should prove too strong. Moreover, the *misaldars'* mutual quarrels cause intense suffering to the people. This sad and saddening state of things must end, it must be ended?

"I agree with you fully and whole heartedly. But what should be done and by whom?" Ranjit Singh replied.

"The first thing to be done is to unite the mutually hostile and warring *misals* under one leadership" Sada Kaur said, 'By the way, we may leave out the Phulkias. They have, all along, held aloof and have even collaborated against the Khalsa Dal. If our *misals* should unite, no foreigner would dare attack us, and none could defeat us. Shah Zaman was taught the lesson of his life by our forces fighting under you, their matchless leader. We can likewise do the same to all our future foes from across the frontiers. Then we can, and shall, turn our attention to aliens holding parts of our Punjab and liquidate them, swiftly and completely."

"Fine dreams they are, to be sure," rejoined Ranjit Singh. "The idea is good, grand and noble. The scheme is splendid and charming. But how can we achieve all this? How can the mutually jealous and ever-warring *misaldars* be persuaded to unite under one leadership? Will they agree to sacrifice their individual powers and independence at the altar of unity? And who is to be the leader?"

Sada Kaur said "Who but you, my dear Ranjit. They chose you to lead the combined Khalsa force against the Durrani. And you amply justified their choice, and proved your worthiness. That should make them inclined to entrust you with more powers, in peace as well as in war. I say with confidence that a high, very high destiny awaits you. Heights of glory and greatness are beckoning you. Gird up your loins and get ready.".

Ranjit Singh said, "Your dreams are charming, no doubt." "But they are, all the same, mere dreams rather too wild

dreams. In your eagerness for me, you are forgetting the stern realities before us. Will the *misaldars* give up their identities, and hand over all their powers and possessions to me? I very much doubt it. They will not readily accept me as their leader."

But Sada Kaur replied, "They did so on two recent occasions. They made you their leader to command their united forces against Shah Zaman. They agreed to be led and commanded by you. And you acquitted yourself most splendidly. They must do that again for the sake of the good of the community and the country."

"Surely they will do so, if Shah Zaman turns up again."

'No' said Sada Kaur, 'they shall do that much earlier and for good. They shall accept you as their leader, in peace and war, in order to make our community united and strong, and to make our Punjab free and powerful. We shall appeal to them. Those who choose to ignore our appeal, shall have to taste and bow before our steel. They should be assured that by agreeing to our proposals, they would not be losers but gainers in the long run. We shall not liquidate the *misaldars* or their families. Their *misals* will go, no doubt, but they themselves will be well provided for."

"That is quite good and wise." Agreed Ranjit Singh. "They will act on the adage that says, 'If we feel that the whole is going to be lost, we should, of our own accord, part with half of it.'

Sada Kaur continued "Let us hope that they will realize that in time, and for their own sake, too. I have my plans for you and for our Punjab. I plan to make you the master of a

great and liberated Punjab. I would see you become a maharaja, the Maharaja of the Punjab, whose name, fame and glory will live and shine in history, whose friendship and favour will be eagerly sought by rulers far and near.

"Splendid, very splendid dreams!" Said Ranjit Singh.  
"But go on."

"I am serious." said Sada Kaur. "I am not dreaming but disclosing my plans. I want you to be the creator of a united, free, powerful, and prosperous Punjab. Let us plan, strive and achieve, heart within and God overhead. Victory and glory shall wait on our banners. We shall give peace, happiness and prosperity to the people. We shall show them how much better it is to be ruled by Punjabis in the Punjab than by foreigners. Isn't it a grand ideal, a nobel task?"

"Indeed yes", agreed Ranjit Singh "But perhaps too high to be achieved. I eagerly desire to make my motherland forever free from foreign invasions. They come too often and too freely. They go about unchecked. They behave like wild beasts let loose on a flock of sheep. They spread panic and misery all round. They plunder and destroy our villages, towns and cities. They massacre the people. They carry away women and girls as their slaves. These Ghaznavis, Durranis, and their ilk must be made to give up doing such brutal and wicked deeds. They must be taught a bitter,unforgettable lesson. They have been visiting us too often. I should like to pay some return visits to their land in due time."

"That is well thought and well put," Said Sada Kaur." Be sure you will do all that and more.'

On hearing this Ranjit Singh said, "However, all this seems to be no better than a wild dream. In my ambitious and

uncontrolled enthusiasm I start building castles in the air. I am getting too prone to day-dreaming."

"There is nothing wrong or unworthy in building castles in the air," continued Sada Kaur. "All castles are first built in the air. Only afterwards they are built on the earth. We have to begin with building castles in the air, and then end with castles on the earth. What is wrong and undesirable is to begin and end with castles in the air alone. We should guard against that failing. Sure and complete success will be ours. Let us ever trust in God and do the right. All the same, we should not be proud, boastful, or overbearing. Let us ever remember that sweetness and humility forms the essence of all virtues and good qualities.'

"I shall ever try to keep my behaviour modest and my projects high, declared Ranjit Singh." May He be my guide and helper at all times and in all places!"

'Amen ! May He accept your prayer!'

## LAHORE LIBERATED

### CITIZENS' DECISION

Lahore had been liberated from the Afghans by the Sikhs in 1765. Three Bhangi Sardars-Lehna Singh, Gujjar Singh, and Sobha Singh- had captured it and divided it among themselves. At the time of Shah Zaman's last invasion, the city was in the possession of the above-said Sardars' sons, namely, Chet Singh, Sahib Singh and Mohar Singh. They paid little heed to the administration of the city or the welfare of its people. They were given to loose and luxurious living. Very often, they indulged in mutual quarrels. Quite often, they used to raid and plunder one another's parts of the city. These quarrels and raids brought much misery to the people in every part of the city. Sikhs, Hindus, and Muslims, all suffered alike. 'The people of Lahore, says a contemporary writer, 'being extremely oppressed, raised their voices in wailing to the skies.'

### CITIZENS' JUBILATIONS

In accordance with the unanimous decision made in a meeting of the Lahore citizens, a letter was addressed to Ranjit Singh. It was signed by the topmost leader of each community. It was sent to him through special, trustworthy messengers. It was speedily delivered to him.

By nature, Ranjit Singh was cautious and sagacious in

such matters. He was averse to acting in haste, without fully weighing the pros and cons. Therefore, before committing himself on this matter or embarking on any action concerning it, he thought it prudent to make sure that the invitation was genuine. For who knows it might be some mischief-mongers' clever device to involve him in a conflict with the Bhangi Sardars.

Accordingly, he deputed a trusted servant of his, Abdur Rahman, to go with the citizens' envoys, study the state of affairs in the city, and advise him what to do. Abdur Rahman went to Lahore. He held talks with the leading Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh citizens of the city. Having studied the situation to his satisfaction, he returned to his master.

After despatching Abdur Rahman to study the situation at Lahore, Ranjit Singh had gone to consult with Sada Kaur at Batala. Abdur Rahman met him there and submitted his report. He assured Ranjit Singh that the invitation was genuine, that it expressed the true feelings of the Lahore citizens. 'Moreover,' added he, 'of the three Lahore Sardars, only one, Sahib Singh, could have offered some effective resistance. He is away from the city. The other two are altogether incapable of offering any such resistance as may cause us any worry or difficulty.'

Ranjit Singh sought Sada Kaur's advice. She was much delighted. She said, 'So our dreams are on their way to realization ! You will be master of the Punjab's capital. Who controls the capital controls the country. Soon you will become master of the Punjab. We should accept the invitation and take immediate action. By helping them we shall be helping ourselves.'

Preparations were made for the attack. When all was

ready, Sada Kaur said to her son-in-law, 'We shall tell our soldiers not to do any harm whatsoever to the people or their property. Victorious armies, as you of course know, are wont to reward themselves by plundering the conquered city. In the process they inflict much suffering and shed much innocent blood. Our soldiers should do nothing of that sort. They should remember that we and they are going to Lahore not to conquer but to deliver. We are not to behave as enemies and conquerors but as friends and deliverers. We ourselves will give them ample rewards.'

Ranjit Singh was of the same view. He concurred with his mother-in-law readily and wholeheartedly. Accordingly strict instructions were given to all the soldiers who were to take part in the coming campaign.

With an army of twenty-five thousand select soldiers, Ranjit Singh started towards Lahore on June 26, 1799. It was the worst part of the year for a military campaign in that part of the Punjab. The summer's heat was intense and scorching. The monsoons might break at any moment and convert the Punjab plains into a vast marsh. Perhaps Ranjit Singh chose this time for the expedition for that very reason. He was sure that the Lahore Sardars had no thought that any attack could or would be made on their city in that hot scorching season. They would be caught napping, taken unawares and ill-prepared for offering any resistance.

Marching at leisure, Ranjit Singh's army arrived close to Lahore in the evening. During the night the entire city was encircled. By sunrise everyone of the twenty-five thousand soldiers was in his place and every gun was in its position. Sada Kaur chose to attack the Delhi Gate. Ranjit Singh went to attack the Anarkali. There he was given a secret message of

welcome from the citizens of Lahore. He rode round the city walls, which he mined in several places. When a breach was blown in the wall, the leader of the Lahore Muslims caused a proclamation to be made with the beat of drums, that he had taken the city's administration into his own hands. He ordered all the gates of the city to be thrown open, so that the deliverers might enter the city.

Ranjit Singh entered the city through the Lohari Gate. Sada Kaur led in her horsemen through the Delhi Gate. Thousands of citizens standing on house tops, raised loud shouts of welcome to their deliverers and showered flowers on them.

Lahore was thus taken with very little bloodshed or loss of life.

#### AN ENEMY MADE A FRIEND

As Abdur Rahman had reported, Sahib Singh Bhangi was away from Lahore when the city was attacked and taken by Ranjit Singh. When Ranjit Singh's forces entered the city, Sahib Singh's family as well as Mohar Singh with his family and retainers fled through other gates. They were not chased and not molested in any way. However, Chet Singh shut himself in the fort.

Ranjit Singh had a mind to attack the fort. Guns were placed in position. But before firing had begun Sada Kaur advised him to hold back orders for the attack on the fort. She said to him, 'Let no shot be fired at the fort. We shall not waste any time and effort in forcing entry into the fort. Let Sardar Chet Singh remain in it as long as he likes. We need have no worry concerning him. Let us attend to other more important and urgent matters.'

Accordingly Ranjit Singh now addressed himself to the essential task of establishing peace and calm in the city.

He pitched his camp under the walls of the fort alongside the Royal Mosque. Deputations of leading citizens from each of three parts of the city waited upon him. They thanked him for his having delivered them from the Bhangi Sardars' misrule, offered him their fullest loyalty, and expressed the hope that an era of peace and plenty would begin for Lahore and the people of Lahore. Ranjit Singh reassured them in every way.

Chet Singh had shut himself in the fort. Ranjit Singh had in no way, disturbed him. Chet Singh did not take long to realize that yield he must, so why should he prolong the suspense and anxiety ? He decided to deliver himself to the victor. The very next day, he sent his envoys to Ranjit Singh. The latter received them with courtesy and kindness. He asked them what their mission was. They said, 'Sardar Chet Singh sent his greetings to you. He says that he is ready to hand over the fort. All he prays for is that his life be spared. He will leave his all here for you.'

Sada Kaur was then by Ranjit Singh's side. She said to him, 'As I have often suggested, you should treat magnanimously all whom you subdue. Don't take away their all from them. Don't make them paupers. Don't earn their lasting enmity and hearty curses. Provide for them handsomely, so that they may pass their lives comfortably and in peace. If you do that, your fallen adversaries will become your friends'

Ranjit Singh accepted her advice. He said to Chet Singh's envoys, 'Go back and tell your master that no harm shall be done to him. He may take away all his belongings. He

may depart in peace, at his pleasure.'

Soon Chet Singh came out of the fort, sad and crest-fallen. With bowed head, he approached Ranjit Singh. The latter rose from his seat and stepped forward to receive him. Then, in the presence of all, he embraced his fallen adversary. Then he announced the grant to him of a handsome *jagir* for his life-time. Thus was a bitter enemy turned into a grateful friend.

The eighteen-year-old conqueror of Lahore entered the fort on July 7, 1799. Guns fired a royal salute. 'Trumpets of happiness were blown and kettledrums of victory were beaten in every direction' There were hearty rejoicings everywhere in the city. The occupation of Lahore by Ranjit Singh marked the beginning of a just and peaceful government after decades of unrest, chaos and misrule.

## 8

## MAHARAJA OF LAHORE

## DISSIDENTS' CONSPIRACY

Before Ranjit Singh's debut on the political stage of the Punjab, Bhangis had been the most important of the Sikh *misals*. They were in possession of Lahore, Amritsar, and most of the Western Punjab. But by ejecting them from Lahore, Ranjit Singh had dealt them a big blow. Erosion of their position had started with their expulsion from that city. They could not but feel perturbed and angry. It was but natural for them to plan to take vengeance on Ranjit Singh.

At the time when Lahore was occupied by Ranjit Singh, Sahib Singh Bhangi, one of the three Sardars who had been in possession of the city was away. He was at Gujrat. When he heard of what had taken place at Lahore, he vowed vengeance against Ranjit Singh. He hurried to Amritsar, where a branch of the Bhangi family was in power. He consulted with his kinsmen and friends there. All shared the fear that after having taken Lahore, Ranjit Singh would take Amritsar and other parts of the Punjab. They were all unanimously of the view that effective steps should be taken to curb Ranjit Singh's power before he became too strong. It was decided that all Sikh Sardars, and even the Pathans of Kasur, should be brought together to oppose him.

Ranjit Singh had twice led the combined forces of the

Sikhs against Shah Zaman, and chased him out of the country. Thereby, he had become the hero of the Punjab. By ejecting the Bhangis from Lahore, he had taken a long leap on the road to ultimate supremacy. As his power and fame increased, the attitude of the other *misaldars* underwent a radical change. They had chosen him as their leader in the campaign against their common enemy, the Afghan invader. But his latest adventure and success had made them burn with hatred and jealousy. His former colleagues turned against him. They met to conspire against him. They allied themselves with the Bhangi Chiefs who had been turned out of Lahore.

Nizamuddin Khan of Kasur was also approached and informed of the intended campaign against Ranjit Singh. He readily joined their ranks. In fact, he had instigated some of the Sikh Sardars to conspire and rise against Ranjit Singh. His grievance against Ranjit Singh was that the latter had been chiefly instrumental in shattering his dreams of becoming the *Subedar* (Governor) of Lahore. Moreover, he had his fears about his own future, too. Ranjit Singh might, in time, decide to liquidate him.

All who were opposed to Ranjit Singh met at Amritsar. It was decided that he should be attacked and driven out of Lahore. Gulab Singh Bhangi was chosen to lead the combined forces of the dissident Sikh Chiefs. These forces under Gulab Singh Bhangi, and the Pathan forces under Nizamuddin Khan of Kasur, advanced towards Lahore in the spring of 1800. Ranjit Singh went out to meet them. He stopped their progress at Bhasin, a village about fifteen kilometres from Lahore.

Skirmishes took place now and then. There was no major or pitched battle. Gulab Singh Bhangi was not very eager to force a decision. He gave himself up to drinking country

liquor and watching dances of nautch girls. One of his drinking bouts caused a haemorrhage which proved fatal. His death broke the spirit of the army which he had led. Dejected and disheartened, the soldiers melted away quietly. Ranjit Singh returned to Lahore, after a sort of two months' spring-time outing in the countryside.

A short time, thereafter a chest containing twenty thousand gold *mohars* was unearthed in an old ruin named *Budhu da Ava*. His enemies having been scattered, and his treasury having been replenished Ranjit Singh was fully established as the master of Lahore. He could now think of acquiring the rest of the Punjab.

#### A HOLY PEACE-MAKER

"Ranjit Singh had captured the capital of the Punjab, no doubt, but he was yet far from being the ruler of the Punjab. As a matter of fact, the capture of Lahore had created for him more enemies than allies. The experience of dissident Sikh Chiefs had made him alert and cautious. He was sure that his enemies would sooner or later, come against him again. So, he decided not to give them time to gang up for that purpose. He made up his mind to deal with them, one by one.

The first among his enemies to receive his attention was the Raja of Jammu. He had collaborated with Nizamuddin Khan of Kasur against him. Ranjit Singh decided to punish the Raja. He marched towards Jammu. In lightning marches he soon came within six kilometres of the city. The Raja was in panic. He had no guts to stand the attack. He made his submission at once. He readily paid a penalty in the form of an elephant and twenty thousand rupees. At the same time, he promised to be loyal in future. In this campaign Ranjit Singh

added to his domains the towns of Vairowal, Narowal and Sarsowal.

Since their expulsion from Lahore and their dismal failure at Bhasin, the Bhangi Sardars had been busy in conspiring against Ranjit Singh. Sahib Singh Bhangi, in particular, had been secretly increasing his army and fighting strength. Then he approached Dal Singh, the Chief of Akalgrah. The two plotted to attack Gujranwala.

Ranjit Singh learnt of their plans and preparations. He decided to fall on them before they were completely ready to attack his city. With a body of ten thousand soldiers and twenty cannons, he marched towards Sahib Singh Bhangi's city of Gujrat, to which he laid siege. The attack was so sudden that the Bhangi Sardar was taken by surprise. He shut himself up in his fort. From the fort's walls he directed gunfire against the besiegers. The fire was returned by the besiegers with great force and precision.

Soon the Bhangi Sardar realized that he would not be able to hold out very long. So he sent his men to Baba Sahib Singh Bedi of Una. They were told to inform the venerable Bedi Sahib about the situation at Gujrat and to pray for his immediate intervention.

On learning of the open rift between the two leading Sardars Baba Sahib Singh Bedi hurried to Gujrat. In the name of the Guru, he ordered the parties to lay down their arms. Such was the prestige of this saint-soldier descendant of Guru Nanak Dev, that the Sardars at once obeyed him without demur. Ranjit Singh was the first to act. He untied his sword from his waist, and placed it on the ground before Baba Sahib. The other Sardars followed suit. For a whole hour the swords

lay on the ground. All the time the Sardars stood with hands folded and heads bowed. Then Baba Sahib Singh Bedi took up Ranjit Singh's sword, tied it round Ranjit Singh's waist, and said to him, 'Cheer up. Within a short time, all your opponents will be destroyed and your rule will be established throughout the country. I wish you to leave Gujrat alone, and be friends with the Bhangi Sardars.'

Ranjit Singh obeyed and departed, leaving the town of Gujrat in the possession of Sahib Singh Bhangi. Then he proceeded towards Akalgarh in order to punish its chief, Dal Singh, who had plotted against him. Ranjit Singh captured the fort and took Dal Singh with him to Lahore. The Chief admitted his fault and prayed to be forgiven. Ranjit Singh readily pardoned his repentant enemy and left him in possession of his estate.

### CORONATION

Ranjit Singh was now the acclaimed leader of the Punjab and was in possession of the Punjab's capital town. He was thus, in all but name, the Maharaja of the Punjab. But he hesitated to assume the formal title of Maharaja. He had cogent reasons for this hesitation. He feared that his assumption of that title might antagonize the other Chiefs. They might again conspire against him. That would be bad and even harmful ; for their strength was not inconsiderable. In addition, they could secure the co-operation of persons like Nizamuddin Khan.

But things were moving in his favour. In February 1809 the leaders of the chief cities of the Punjab, Ranjit Singh's prominent Sardars, and his whole army through its officers submitted a joint petition to him. In it they prayed that a large

gathering be called at Lahore to which all Sikh Sardars should be invited. In that gathering, it was suggested, the title of Maharaja of the Punjab be given to him by the people

Ranjit Singh was still hesitant but Sada Kaur persuaded him to accept the title. She said to him, 'Your assumption of the title will mark the full realization of our dreams. I, for one, have been yearning and praying for this, all these years. By taking on the title of "Maharaja of the Punjab," you will assume rights of sovereignty not only over all Sikhs, but also over the people who live within the geographical limits of the Punjab. It will give you a legal right to demand that the territories which have previously paid revenue to Lahore, should now pay tribute and owe allegiance to you. As you know, such territories are Jammu, Kashmir, the Rajput hill states, Multan, Bahawalpur, Dera Ismail Khan, Dera Gazi Khan, Mankera etc. The assumption of the title will open up endless possibilities. So you must agree, my dear Lion Victor of Battles.'

At last Ranjit Singh agreed to a formal investiture. The Baisakhi day of 1801 A.D.(April 12) was fixed for the ceremony. On that day, prayers were said in the mosques, temples, and gurdwaras, all over his domain. A large gathering was held in the fort. It was attended, among others by all Sikh Sardars and important leaders of all towns and cities. When all was ready, prayers were said before Guru Granth Sahib by Bhai Gurmukh Singh, leader of the Lahore Sikhs. Then Baba Sahib Singh Bedi applied a saffron mark to Ranjit Singh's forehead, and proclaimed him 'Maharaja of the Punjab.' A royal salute was fired from the fort. In the afternoon, the Maharaja rode on the back of richly decorated elephant and paraded through the city's main streets. The streets were crowded by his jubilant subjects, on whom were showered gold and silver coins. In the evening, there was *deepmala* in

the city, that is, the city was illuminated with *oil-lamps*. There was also a rich display of fire-works. The popular rejoicing continued throughout the night.

## A PUNJABI STATE

Even after assuming the title of 'Maharaja of the Punjab', Ranjit Singh fully avoided any display of his royal status, and tried to be known more as a peasant leader than as a king. He had been crowned king but he still refused to wear an emblem of royalty on his simple turban. He refused to sit on a throne. He continued to hold *darbars* seated cross-legged in his chair. More often, he liked to recline on cushions on a carpet, in the oriental fashion.

He ordered new coins to be struck. But the coins did not bear his effigy or his name. They bore, instead, the name and effigy of Guru Nanak. They were called Nanak Shahi coins, coins of the Emperor Nanak. Some coins had the same inscription in Persian as had appeared on the coins struck by Baba Banda Singh Bahadur, namely:-

*'Deg o tegh o fateh o nusrat bedirang*

*Yaft az' Nanak Guru Gobind Singh.*

(The Kettle and the Sword -symbols of Charity and Power, victory, and ready patronage have been obtained from Guru Nanak, Gobind Singh.)

Similarly, the seal of government did not bear his name, but the same Persian inscription. His government he called not his own but Sarkar Khalsaji, that is, of the people who had brought it into being. His court was called Darbar Khalsaji. He himself liked to be addressed by the simple title of Singh

Sahib. By the people in general he was called *Sarkar*.

Soon after his coronation, Ranjit Singh directed his attention to re-organizing the administration and improving the condition and appearance of Lahore. The city walls and gates were all repaired. He found that under the Bhangi misrule, crime had increased a great deal. To check it, he posted pickets at all strategic points. The city was divided into wards. Each ward had its *Chaudhri* or Headman, who was responsible for peace in his locality. He could call out the police whenever there was a disturbance. The first Head of Police (Kotwal) of Lahore was a Muslim named Imam Bakhsh.

He also reorganized the administration of justice, in such a way that cheap and ready justice was made available to all. The majority of the population was Muslim. They wanted their affairs to be regulated in accordance with the law of *Shariat*. Hence, he appointed special courts for the Muslims. Nizam Din was appointed Chief Quazi (Judge). Two other well-qualified and trusted Muslims were appointed *muftis*.



Hakim Nuruddin



#### Raja Dina Nath Finance Minister

A chain of dispensaries was opened in different parts of the city. In them Unani medicine was dispensed free of charge. Hakim Nuruddin, younger brother of Foreign Minister Fakir Azizuddin, was appointed the Chief Medical Officer. Schools were opened in all parts of the city where free education was imparted to children of all communities. His Finance Minister was a Hindu-Raja Dina Nath. Raja Dhian Singh, also a Hindu, was his Prime Minister.

Within a short time, Ranjit Singh convinced the people that he did not intend to set up a Sikh Kingdom. He wanted, rather, to set up a Punjabi State in which all Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs, would be equal before the law, and would have the same rights and duties. He invited talented Muslims and Hindus to join his service thus establishing a truly secular Punjabi government.

## 9

## TAKING OF AMRITSAR

Amritsar was the Punjab's second largest city. But commercially, it was more important than the largest city, Lahore. It was the chief trading centre for northern India. Goods were brought here from Central Asia by caravans, and exchanged for products of India. It was therefore, a rich and prosperous city. For the Sikhs, it was their most sacred place. Indeed, as far as the Sikhs were concerned, Amritsar was the most important place in the world. Therefore, for anyone who aspired to be the leader of the Sikhs and the Maharaja of the Punjab, it was necessary to take Amritsar in order to justify his aspiration and title.

At that time, Amritsar was divided among about a dozen Bhangi families. They owned different parts of the city. Each family had built its own tiny fortress in the part which they owned. They had in employment a number of armed tax-collectors. These tax collectors were hard-hearted. They made heavy collections at the point of the sword. Moreover, there was frequently friction between the tax-collectors of different families. Quite often, this led to street fights. Consequently, the citizens were tired of this state of things. They made secret approaches to Maharaja Ranjit Singh, and requested him to come to their deliverance.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh had already learnt that the Bhangi Sardars of Amritsar were preparing to fight against him. They

were conspiring with Ramgarhias for that purpose. Mai Sukhan, the widow of the Bhangi Chief Gulab Singh, was said to be the most active participant in this conspiracy. It was she who enlisted the Ramgarhias' support. Her's was the only family of importance in Amritsar. She was in occupation of the Gobindgarh fort.

The Amritsar citizens' request reached the Maharaja in the autumn of 1802. Preparations for marching upon Amritsar were started at once. After a short time, the combined forces of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Sada Kaur, and Fateh Singh Ahluwalia reached Amritsar. The city was encircled. The Ramgarhias who had promised to join the Amritsar Sardars, did not turn up. Their non-arrival was a great damper for the Sardars. They did not have the guts to come out to oppose the forces from Lahore. They shut up the city's gates. They mounted guns on their fortress within the city and began to fire on the besiegers.

Ranjit Singh was anxious to respect and preserve the sanctity of the Sikhs' most sacred city. After taking counsel with Sada Kaur, he ordered that guns with only blank powder charges were to be fired. Their noise would, he thought, help the Sardars to realize that resistance was useless. Loud war-cries of *Sat Sri Akal* were repeatedly raised aloud by the besieging Sikh forces. War-drums were beaten most energetically.

The booming of guns, the loud war-cries of *Sat Sri Akal*, and the thundering noise of the war drums, filled the people with fear and made them very nervous. They were all eager to end the struggle.

At that time there was, in Amritsar, a remarkable person

who was highly respected by the citizens, and who was destined to play a most significant part in Maharaja's battles, and to become a most important general in his armies of conquest. That person was Akali Phula Singh.

Born in 1791 in village Shinh, Amritsar district, he had joined the Nihang order in early life. He had dedicated his life to the care of the Sikh shrines. He was most devout and sincere, and loved to serve the people in accordance with Guru Nanak-Guru Gobind Singh's teachings. Consequently, he was highly respected not only by the citizens of Amritsar but also by all others who knew or heard of him.

He was deeply distressed to find Sikh forces engaged in fighting among themselves. The spectacle of Sikhs, firing on Sikhs was very painful to him. He consulted with the leading citizens. Then, accompanied by leaders of the Amritsar citizens, he marched out and stood between the opposing forces. He succeeded in persuading them to stop fighting. The Sardars surrendered one by one. Mai Sukhan was the last to agree to surrender. She gave up the fort. She was given a handsome pension for herself and her son, Gurdit Singh.

Thus the fort of Amritsar passed into the Maharaja's hands. It was a valuable acquisition. He also acquired five cannons. One of them was Ahmad Shah Abdali's large Zam Zam, which had caused havoc among the Maratha ranks at Panipat. It had been taken from the Afghans by the Bhangi Sardars. Since then it has been named the *Bhangian di tope*.

Akali Phula Singh was largely responsible for Maharaja Ranjit Singh's easy and bloodless victory at Amritsar. The Maharaja invited him to join his army. He agreed. He brought with him between two to three thousand Nihangs or Akalis to

join the State Army. This acquisition of Baba Phula Singh and his Akalis, was, for the Maharaja, far more important than the acquisition of the Amritsar fort and its five cannons. The Maharaja owed many of his celebrated victories to the desperate bravery of Baba Phula Singh and his Akalis.

The holy city of Amritsar, thus became a part of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's domain in December 1802. He was given a rousing, tumultuous reception in the sacred city. He rode through its narrow streets mounted on a decorated elephant. He was every where cheered most lustily by the jubilant crowds.

He and his Sardars then went to pay homage at the sacred shrine, the Darbar Sahib. They bathed in the sacred pool and made large offerings at the temple. The Maharaja donated a large sum with which the temple was to be built in marble and gold leaf.

# 10

## TOWARDS A UNITED PUNJAB

### JHANG

A number of independent principalities still existed in the Punjab. Some of them still continued to declare their allegiance to Afghanistan. The Maharaja's ambition to create a united Punjab could not be fulfilled until these independent principalities were made to declare allegiance to the government of the Punjab. Accordingly, he sent invitations to these principalities to do so. Many of them complied. But some of them contemptuously turned down the Maharaja's invitation. Among those who did so was Ahmad Khan Sial, who owned the territories of Jhang. He was very very rich and the best horse-breeder of the Punjab.

As was but natural, the Maharaja decided to humble the pride of Ahmad Khan. In the beginning of 1803, he led his troops against Jhang. Ahmad Khan declared *Jihad* and enlisted thousands of Sial and Kharl tribesmen to help him in his 'holy war' against the infidel Sikhs. So he appeared in the field at the head of a formidable host. On the arrival of the Lahore forces, the battle started with a cannonade from both sides. When Ahmad Khan's *Ghazis* (Muslim crusaders) had exhausted their gunpowder, their horsemen made a fierce charge. The Maharaja's troops successfully withstood the fierce attack. Then they made the counterattack. The Sials galloped away and took shelter in their fortress town. The Maharaja's ele-

phants crashed through one of the gates. His forces rushed in and compelled the Sials to lay down their arms.

In the commotion of the hand to hand fighting in the fortress, Ahmad Khan managed to slip away to Multan. But after some time, he came to realize that the Maharaja did not want to deprive him of his territory; that what he wanted was to induce the Sials and other tribesmen of the region to throw in their lot with their Punjabi brethren.

So persuaded, he sent a deputation to the Maharaja. He admitted his mistake, prayed to be forgiven and agreed to make his submission. The Maharaja was ever ready to forget and forgive. He reinstated Ahmad Khan at Jhang. Ahmad Khan undertook to pay six thousand rupees as annual revenue to the Punjab government. He also gave the Maharaja a number of his best-bred horses.

## KASUR

Nizamuddin Khan of Kasur was a sworn and long-standing foe of the Sikhs and Maharaja Ranjit Singh. As we know, he had invited Shah Zaman to attack Punjab. Then he had joined his own forces with those of the invaders and fought against the Sikhs who were led by Ranjit Singh. Then he tried to persuade the Muslims of Lahore to invite and help him to assume *Subedari* of Lahore. Then he joined the dissident Sikh Sardars and fought against Maharaja Ranjit Singh at Bhasin. Still later, he conspired with Sahib Singh Bhangi of Gujrat against the Maharaja.

On account of all this, Maharaja Ranjit Singh was convinced that, unless Nizamuddin Khan's power was completely broken, he would continue to conspire and create trouble.

Hence, after settling the affairs of Lahore, he turned his attention to the Pathans of Kasur. Towards the end of 1801, he sent Fateh Singh Kalianwala to chastise Nizamuddin. The Pathans came out to meet the advancing Lahore troops. They fought with desperate bravery. But they soon had to retreat behind the walls of the town. The siege did not last long. The Lahore troops blew up one of the gates. They entered the town and began mowing down the Pathans. The latter laid down their arms. Nizamuddin agreed to pay a heavy penalty and to recognize Maharaja Ranjit Singh as his sovereign. The Maharaja accepted this.

But Nizamuddin did not keep the peace for long. Soon, he forgot his oath of allegiance to the Lahore Darbar. When the Maharaja was engaged in dealing with the small Muslim principalities in the south, Nizammuddin took advantage of his absence. He plundered some villages near Lahore. On hearing this, the Maharaja returned hurriedly and made straight for Kasur. Nizamuddin withdrew his troops into the town. He made preparations to stand a long siege. Ranjit Singh ordered heavy guns to be brought from Lahore. They soon pounded the walls of the fort. Nizamuddin surrendered. The ever generous Maharaja pardoned him once again, and allowed him to keep his territory as before. Nizamuddin swore once more to be loyal to the Lahore Darbar.

After Nizamuddin's death his place was taken by his brother Kutubuddin Khan. He began to make preparations to aim another blow at Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He enlisted a large number of fanatic Muslims for *jihad* or holy war against the 'infidel' Sikhs. He fortified Kasur and stocked the fort with provisions that would be sufficient to outlast a long siege. He persuaded Nawab Muzaffar Khan of Multan to supply him with trained soliders and war-material.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh learnt of what Kutubuddin Khan

was doing. He sent his minister Fakir Azizuddin to Kasur in order to persuade Kutubuddin to give up his planned disloyal action against the Maharaja. Fakir Azizuddin used all his arts of persuasion. At the end of his long talk, he said, 'Khan Sahib, the days of religious wars are gone. The Maharaja commands the affection and loyalty of thousands of Muslims. It is wrong to say that to fight him and his troops is to engage in a *jihad*. You will be fighting not against Sikhs but Punjabis-Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims. You should not think of engaging in such a fight. I would advise you to continue to be faithful to the Maharaja and the government of the Punjab'

But Kutubuddin Khan refused to give in. He Said, 'Be gone. I refuse to listen to one who eats the salt of an infidel. You are not much better than an infidel yourself. Tell your master to come. I am ready to receive him.'

On hearing Fakir Azizuddin's report the Maharaja made ready to deal with Kutubuddin Khan. He led his army himself. Akali Phula Singh, with his band of Nihangs, also accompanied the Maharaja.

The battle began on the morning of February 10, 1807. In the beginning, Akali Phula Singh and his Nihangs led the attack on the *Ghazis* or Muslim crusaders. The latter were driven behind their stockades. Then the artillery went into action. For full one month the Sikh guns continued firing on the walls of the Kasur fort. They failed to make any impression. At last, one night, Sikh miners made a tunnel up to the base of the western bastion. A heavy charge of gunpowder was put under it. It was fired early in the morning. It tore a large gap in the wall. Akali Phula Singh and his Nihangs charged through the breach. After a fierce hand-to-hand fight, the Akalis succeeded in vanquishing the Pathans and the *Ghazis*.

The fort was thus captured. Kutubuddin Khan tried to run away. He was, however, caught and brought before the Maharaja who not only forgave Kutubuddin Khan and spared his life, but also granted him a handsome *jagir* at Mamdot. Kasur was made a part of the Punjab under the Lahore Darbar.

## MULTAN

Multan was a district of the Punjab. It had been taken by the Bhangi Sardars more than once. But they had been ejected from there. Since the Afghan invasions, Multan began to have closer administrative ties with Kabul than with Lahore. Its ruling family, being Muslim, considered an allegiance with the Afghans more convenient than one with Lahore. Ranjit Singh was determined to reclaim Multan and bring it with in the country to which it belonged, that is to make its ruler owe allegiance to Lahore instead of to Kabul.

Early in 1808, he announced his intention to proceed to Multan. Almost all his Sardars advised him against undertaking the expedition. They thought that Nawab Muzaffar Khan of Multan would prove too strong for, the Lahore forces. But Maharaja Ranjit Singh stuck to his resolve. He marched out of Lahore at the head of his troops.

Nawab Muzaffar Khan; on his part, was fully prepared to meet Ranjit Singh's attack. Raising the familiar cry of *Jihad* or holy war against the 'infidel' Sikhs, he had roused the Muslims of the neighbouring districts to come to his aid. They came in their thousands. But they could not stop the advance of the Lahore forces. The latter entered the suburbs of Multan without any difficulty. They directed their gunfire on the mud fort which was in the heart of the city. Muzaffar Khan soon real-

ized that he could not hold out for long. So, he made his submission. He agreed to pay indemnity, send his quota of revenue to Lahore instead of sending it to Kabul, and remain faithful to the Lahore Darbar. Thus Multan became a part of the Punjab.

But Muzaffar Khan soon forgot his oath of allegiance to the Lahore Darbar. In 1807, he helped Kutubuddin Khan of Kasur against the Maharaja by sending troops and war material. After dealing with Kutubuddin Khan of Kasur, Maharaja Ranjit Singh decided to punish Muzaffar Khan for his share in Kutubuddin's defiance of the Lahore Darbar's authority. He ordered his army to proceed from Kasur to Multan. As before, Muzaffar Khan began to rouse his Muslim neighbours to come to his aid against the 'infidel' Sikhs; but this time none was willing to share his adventure. The Lahore forces entered the city unchecked. Muzaffar Khan found that resistance was useless. He made his submission and prayed for forgiveness. The ever generous Maharaja forgave him again. The Nawab paid twenty thousand rupees as penalty for his assistance to Kutubuddin Khan of Kasur.

But Muzaffar Khan was incorrigible. He again began to hold back payment of the promised revenue. Even otherwise, his conduct was obstructive and far from desirable. Influenced by his example, other southern Nawabs also became tardy in paying the revenues due to the Lahore Darbar.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh was convinced that Muzaffar Khan was untrustworthy and that he would always pose a grave danger to the government of the Punjab. He decided that for the creation of a united Punjab, it was necessary to liquidate the Nawab. Hence, early in 1818, he decided to make an all-out effort to capture Multan. A force of twenty thousand, under the

command of Prince Kharak Singh and Minister Dewan Chand, was ordered to Multan. Artillery, under the command of Ilahi Bakhsh, was also ordered to proceed thither.

Nawab Muzaffar became aware of the Lahore Darbar's preparations against him. He realized that this time he would not be able to bribe or buy off the Darbar. As before, he roused the Muslim population of the countryside to fight a holy war against the 'infidel' Sikhs. He got a good response this time. He also prepared the city and the fort for a long siege.

In due course, the Darbar forces reached Multan. The first engagement was in the open. Here the *Ghazis* -Muslim crusaders-did most of the fighting. The battle lasted one day. The *Ghazis* gained the martyrdom that they sought. Muzaffar Khan withdrew his regular forces behind the city walls. The Lahore troops surrounded the city and began to bombard its walls. For about two weeks, the defenders held their own in the city. But by then the city wall was blown up at several points. The Lahore army entered the city. The defenders retreated into the fort.

For a whole month, Ilahi Bakhsh's batteries pounded the fort walls, without making any impression. The Bhangi cannon, Zam Zama, was brought up. With each shot it sent eighty pounds of solid metal into the wall and tore huge holes in it. The other cannons also went on doing their work. The gunners worked with wonderful enthusiasm. But the besieged with equally dauntless bravery plugged up the holes in the fort-walls and the fort was held for a long time.

Then, one night, a party of Akalis or Nihangs, under the cover of darkness, managed to lay a mine under the fort-wall. Next morning, a huge portion of the fort-wall was blown out.

Thereupon Nawab Muzaffar Khan decided to surrender. He sent his envoys to discuss and settle terms of surrender. He accepted the terms and asked for a treaty to be drawn up accordingly. A draft was prepared. When, however, it was presented to him for signature, he was dissuaded by his soldiers from signing it. 'It is better' said the brave soldiers, 'to die in honour than to live in shame. We will not surrender, but fight the enemy to the last.'

The Nawab, accordingly, refused to sign the treaty. He got ready to fight. The breaches in the fort-wall were plugged-up during the night. The besieged then hurled defiance at the besiegers.

So the attack was renewed. The gunners did their work with greater enthusiasm and precision. Many daring deeds of matchless bravery were performed, and many soul-stirring incidents occurred, during that historic siege of Multan.

One such soul-stirring incident is recorded by a Muslim eyewitness, named Ghulam Jilani, in his book *Jang-i-Multan* (Battle of Multan). He says:-

'While the bombardment of the fort-walls was going on, one of the Sikh guns lost one of its wheels. The Sardar in charge of the gun was of the opinion that if he could fire a few more shots, he would certainly succeed in making a breach in the wall. But that could not be done unless the lost wheel was replaced. There was no time for repairs. The delay was very dangerous. But from where to get the wheel or a substitute? He had a brain wave, inspired, no doubt, by his unlimited, irrepressible enthusiasm for the cause. He said to his gunner, "There is only one way to achieve our purpose. We should

come forward to serve as a wheel. We should lay our shoulders, one by one under the axle on the broken side. The gun should go on firing shots till a breach is made in the fort-wall. Our lives will be lost no doubt; but it will be a worthy contribution towards the victory of the Panth. We should gladly sacrifice our lives for the honour of the Khalsa. What is your opinion, brother? Be quick. No time for deliberation ”

‘All his gunners jumped at the idea. Every one of them wanted to be the first to make the supreme sacrifice. There was wrangling amongst them for priority. But they were soon silenced by the Sardar. He said that they should come in only on the order of their ranks. “As I am the senior-most,” added he, ‘I shall go in first of all. Others should follow in the order of their seniority.’ He did accordingly. He supported the axle on his shoulder. The gun was fired. He fell down dead under the pressure of the gun.

‘One by one the brave gunners went forward to lay down their lives as their leader had done. It was after the tenth or eleventh shot that a breach was made in the wall. By then as many of the brave, patriotic gunners had sacrificed their lives under the pressure of the gun. As soon as the breach was made, Akali Sadhu Singh and his Akalis rushed to the spot with swords in their hands, shouting “*Sat Sri Akal*” and made a desperate charge through the breach’.

‘I saw all this happen before my eyes. More than once, even I felt, inspired and moved by this spirit of self-sacrifice to follow the brave gunners under the axle. But if there was anything that kept me back, it was nothing but the desire in my mind to narrate to the world the story of this unique spirit of self-sacrifice of these Sikhs in the cause of their nation.’

As said above, Akali Sadhu Singh and his Akalis made a desperate charge through the breach which the brave, self-sacrificing Sikh gunners had helped to make at the cost of their lives. The *Nihangs* under their leader closed upon the defenders and drove them back till they came to the steps of Muzzaffar Khan's palace. The old Nawab and his sons donned the green dress of their faith, perfumed their beards, and, with drawn swords, 'came out to answer the call of the angel of death.' They fought like heroes. But the odds were too heavy against them. Nawab Muzaffer Khan, his two sons, and a nephew were killed. His two younger sons were captured alive.

The fort was captured on June 2, 1818. A few days later, one of Muzaffar Khan's younger sons was brought into the Maharaja's court. The Maharaja had heard with admiration of the bravery displayed by the old Nawab. He admired bravery above all manly virtues. He got up from his seat and took up the young Nawab in his arms and hugged him. That was how he treated a brave adversary's son.

A few days later, Nawab Muzaffar Khan's second captive son was brought to Lahore and taken to the Maharaja's court. The Maharaja got up from his seat, embraced the boy, and made him sit by his side. The lad said a lot of things against the Darbar troops and accused them of treachery. The Maharaja heard it all without feeling angry or annoyed even in the least. He only smiled and patted the lad in admiration.

That was how the lion-hearted, generous Maharaja received the sons of a fallen brave though troublesome adversary. Later, he granted the boys handsome *jagirs* for their maintenance.

Here one is tempted to recall the treatment which Nawab

Wazir Khan of Sarhind had accorded to the two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh who were bricked alive. Their only fault was that they were sons of a brave adversary. Here a devout follower of Guru Gobind Singh acting in a truly Sikh spirit spared the lives of his brave adversary's sons, treated them with affection, and gave them handsome *jagirs*. He forgot all the wrong actions of their father.

The conquest of Multan ended the Afghan influence in the Punjab, and broke up the solid group of Muslim states in the South. It subdued the chiefs of Bahawalpur, Dera Ghazi Khan, Dera Ismail Khan, and Mankera. Moreover, Multan by itself was a valuable acquisition. It yielded an annual revenue of seven lakhs.

# 11

## KOH-I-NOOR

### THE ROYAL AFGHAN REFUGEES

How the world-famous Koh-i-Noor (the Mount of Light) came into Maharaja Ranjit Singh's hands is an interesting story. This priceless jewel, the most brilliant of all diamonds in the world, was taken from the famous mines of Golcanda in very ancient times. It is earliest recorded as being in the possession of the Pandavas. Then it went 'underground'. It remained concealed or buried somewhere. In February 1621, it came into the hands of the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan. In January 1739, the Persian invader, Nadir Shah took it, along with the Peacock Throne, from the Mughal Emperor Muhammad Shah. On Nadir Shah's assassination in June, 1749, this priceless jewel came into the hands of Ahmed Shah Abdali. After the latter's death it became the possession of his son, Taimur. After Taimur's death it was taken over by Shah Zaman. From him it came into the possession of Shah Shuja and his wife, Wafa Begum. It was from these two that the Koh-i-Noor came into Maharaja Ranjit Singh's hands on June 1, 1813.

In order to understand how and why Shah Shuja and his wife, Wafa Begum, parted with this precious possession of theirs, we shall have to peep a little into Afghanistan's history. After Taimur's death, Shah Zaman ascended the throne of Kabul. He was soon overthrown and replaced by his brother Mahmud. The latter put out his brother Shah Zaman's eyes, in

order to put him out of the picture for ever. But soon Shah Shuja, one of his brothers ousted Mahmud from Kabul and occupied the throne. Soon, however Shah Shuja was expelled and Mahmud re-occupied the throne of Kabul. Shah Shuja was able, once again, to capture the throne, but was deprived of it again by his brother Mahmud after four months. All this drama of seating and unseating this or that son of Taimur was done by one Wazir Fateh Khan, leader of the Barakazai tribe.

Driven from the throne, Shah Shuja fled to Attock. There he found asylum with its governor, Jahan Dad Khan. But, while at Attock Shah Shuja began to try to win over the king-maker, Wazir Fateh Khan. Jahan Dad Khan was bitterly opposed to the Wazir. When therefore he came to know of Shah Shuja's move, he had him put in chains and sent for safe custody to his brother, Ata Muhammad, governor of Kashmir..

In February 1810, the six hundred odd wives of Shah Shuja, and the blinded Shah Zaman, with his concourse of wives, came to the Punjab and prayed for asylum. Maharaja Ranjit Singh granted them a liberal pension and made arrangements for their residence at Rawalpindi. But Shah Zaman would not sit idle even in exile. He began to send envoys to foreign powers. They were to persuade those foreign powers to help him in recovering the throne of Kabul. Maharaja Ranjit Singh did not like this. To put an end to Shah Zaman's intercourse with foreign powers, he suggested that the royal families would be more comfortable and secure in the capital.

In November 1811, Shah Zaman, the one-time conqueror of Lahore, and his wives and relations came back to that city as beggars. While leaving for home after his fourth invasion, Shah Zaman had proclaimed that he would return soon and conquer India. He had come back now but not as an invader or



Fakir Azizuddin  
Foreign Minister

would-be conqueror but as a beggar to seek asylum from Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

On arrival at Lahore, Shah Zaman was treated with honour. He was escorted by State troops to the spacious house, *Mubarak Haveli*, set apart for him in the city. The Maharaja, dressed in ceremonial saffron, welcomed him with an embrace. He then presented to him a sum of one thousand rupees.

### DELIVERERS

Thus sheltered and provided for, the royal refugees from Afghanistan began to live a life of peace in Lahore. Fakir Azizuddin was deputed to look after their comforts. But after some time, there arrived in Lahore an agent of Wazir Fateh Khan. His object was to solicit the Maharaja's help for conquest of Kashmir. On behalf of Wazir Fateh Khan, the agent offered to the Maharaja an equal division of the loot acquired during the campaign, and thereafter, nine lakh rupees every year.

Shah Zaman and his relations learnt of the agent's arrival and mission. Shah Zaman, Shah Shuja's senior wife, Wafa Begum, and her sons were terrified. They feared that if Wazir Fateh Khan and Mahmud captured Kashmir, Shah Shuja, who was imprisoned there, would fall into their hands. Who could say what they would do to him? Wafa Begum was stricken with deep grief and anxiety. She sent a message to the Maharaja, through Fakir Azizuddin, Saying, 'If the Maharaja puts forth good efforts and brings about the occasion when the honourable Shah may come to Lahore, an invaluable piece of diamond would be offered in compensation.' That 'invaluable piece of diamond' was no other than the Koh-i-Noor diamond.

The Maharaja took counsel with his courtiers. They expressed themselves in favour of making all efforts to get Shah Shuja released from captivity and restored to his grief-stricken family. It was a humane task which, as Guru Nanak-Guru Gobind Singh's Sikhs, it was their duty to perform. They also felt that this task would become easier if the Darbar forces were to work in conjunction with those of Wazir Fateh Khan. It would, thereby be possible to fulfil the objective of the Wazir as well as that of Shah Shuja's family.

Accordingly, early in the spring of 1812, the pick of the Darbar's troops were ordered to Kashmir. They were under the command of the Maharaja's best generals, Diwan Mohkam Chand and Dal Singh. They reached Jehlam where they were joined by Wazir Fateh Khan and his army.

The two armies left Jehlam in the first week of December 1812. The shrewd Diwan Mohkam Chand soon realized that the Wazir was not sincere and that he was not likely to keep his promises given to the Darbar. He warned the Maharaja and told him, 'Wazir Fateh Khan has taken two big forts with their treasures. He has kept the whole loot. He should have given half of it to the Darbar as promised.'

The Maharaja instructed Diwan Mohkam Chand to give no sign of any dissatisfaction or doubt. He added, ' Go on conforming with his wishes. Remember that our main object is not loot or territory, but release of the unlucky Shah. We have to concentrate on that humane task'.

It was learnt that Shah Shuja was imprisoned in the fort of Shergarh. The Afghans pressed on at frantic speed. They wanted to reach Shergarh before the Darbar forces should do

so. They were soon two marches ahead of the Lahore army. Diwan Mohkam Chand felt sure that if the Afghans managed to reach there first, they would do violence to Shah Shuja. So, he made a short cut and reached Shergarh before the Afghans. He lost no time in assaulting the fort. Meanwhile the Afghans had also reached the fort and they also joined in the assault. The fort was forced to surrender. The Afghans rushed in and busied themselves in discovering and looting the treasury. But Diwan Mohkam Chand's soldiers rushed about searching for the royal prisoner. They found him in a damp, dark dungeon. He was chained hand and foot, dressed in dirty rags, and famished from want of adequate food. They brought him away and took him to their camp. Wazir Fateh Khan demanded that Shah Shuja be handed over to him. But Diwan Mohkam Chand firmly refused to do so. Thereupon the Wazir tried to take the Shah by force. But he failed in his attempt. Then he accused Diwan Mohkam Chand of breaking his word and said, 'I will not give you any share in the booty.'

Shah Shuja's chains were broken. He was dressed in new clothes and properly fed. Then he was taken to Lahore with due honour and safety

### KOH-I-NOOR CHANGES HANDS

In due course Shah Shuja reached Lahore with the Darbar army. The Maharaja received him with the same pomp and ceremony as that with which he had received his blinded brother, Shah Zaman, a year earlier. The Shah was delivered safely to Wafa Begum at *Mubarak Haveli*, the spacious mansion which had been placed at the disposal of the royal Afghan refugees.

On the following day, a message was sent to Shah Shuja and his wife, Wafa begum, asking them to deliver the Koh-i-

Noor. Neither the Shah nor his wife made any reply to the note. It was but natural for them to feel unwilling to part with so precious an object. But it had been solemnly promised to be handed over on the Shah's deliverance and return to his family. In the venture, over one thousand soldiers had been sacrificed and a huge expenditure had been incurred. Moreover, Wazir Fateh Khan had taken possession of Kashmir without sharing the loot. He had clearly no intention of paying nine lakh rupees a year as promised. All this was due to the Darbar's forces having rescued Shah Shuja and not having handed him over to his bitter enemy Wazir Fateh Khan. In view of all this, how could the Darbar let the Shah and his wife break her promise?

A reminder was sent to the Begum after a few days. Again there was no response. Then Fakir Azizuddin met her and urged her to honour her word. He told her how much the venture undertaken to release her husband had cost the Darbar. He added, 'It was on account of my strong persuasion that the Maharaja undertook the difficult, costly, campaign. I assured him that you would most readily honour your word. Please realize my awkward position. I feel very awkward, even ashamed. The Maharaja has good reason to be angry with me. He might cease to trust me in future. Honour your word and let the Maharaja have the promised priceless precious stone.'

The Begum replied, 'The diamond is not with me. I pawned it with a moneylender in Kandhar.'

Fakir Azizuddin said, 'Then why did you promise to give something which you did not possess?' The Begum kept mum.

On hearing the Begum's reply, the Maharaja shook his head, and said, 'I have not the least doubt that the diamond is

with the Begum. She is telling a lie. She is a liar and promise-breaker. But I don't want to employ any hard measures at present. I would make her a fair offer. Go and tell her that I shall make a token payment of three lakh rupees now and assign a *jagir* of fifteen thousand rupees a year to the family in lieu of the Koh-i-Noor.' But even this liberal offer failed to bring round the Begum and her husband. Fakir Azizuddin's urgent appeals had no effect on them.

The Maharaja's patience was exhausted. He could have taken possession of the diamond by force. Seeing the way in which it had been taken away from India, such a course would have been quite excusable. But the Maharaja decided to avoid violence. The course followed by him was an honourable one.

The Maharaja sent word to the Shah and his wife that the diamond should be delivered without any further fuss or delay. He decided to give an indication of what the consequences of the Begum's persistent refusal to honour her word would be. He placed a heavy guard round *Mubarak Haveli*. In this way, Shah Shuja, who had till then been a royal guest, became a virtual prisoner.

But for many days, the Shah made no move. The Maharaja then ordered that the rations supplied to the Shah's household be reduced. The *Kotwal* was instructed that the Shah and his family were to be treated as being under arrest. Soon the Shah realized that he had no alternative to handing over the Koh-i-Noor. So at last, he agreed to honour his wife's word. A date was fixed for the delivery of the coveted jewel.

On the appointed day, June 1, 1813, the Maharaja rode to *Mubarak Haveli* to take over the Koh-i-Noor. He was accom-

panied by six hundred horsemen. Shah Shuja received him cordially, embraced him, and conducted him to his room. Seated there, they inquired about each other's health. Then they fell silent. Shah Shuja made no move to deliver the diamond. The prolonged silence irritated the Maharaja. He whispered to one of his courtiers, 'Remind the Shah of the object of our visit. He seems to be lost in the thought.'

On being reminded, the Shah beckoned one of his servants and ordered him to bring the diamond. The servant went into the ladies' apartment. He came back with a bundle. He gave it to the Maharaja. The Maharaja unwrapped the bundle revealing, the Koh-i-Noor. He examined it keenly with his single right eye. He then rewrapped it in the same cloth and rode away.

The Maharaja was delighted to be in possession of the Koh-i-Noor. A week later he brought it out for examination. He showed it to some select jewellers. They declared that it was priceless, for no other similar jewel existed anywhere else. It was three and a half *tolas* or about forty one grammes in weight and equal to a hen's egg in size.

# 12

## TOWARDS A GREATER PUNJAB

### END OF THE GURKHA MENACE

In 1809 the Gurkhas under Amar Singh Thapa subdued the hill chieftains along the Himalayan range. They were now trying hard to capture Kangra. Sansar Chand, ruler of Kangra, appealed to Maharaja Ranjit Singh to help him against the Gurkhas. On the other hand the Gurkha leader sent word to the Maharaja, 'If you stay away and let me take Kangra, I shall pay tribute to you according to your pleasure.'

But the Maharaja considered Kangra to be a part of the Punjab. He would not let it be captured by the Nepalese. So he replied that he would defend Kangra against all outsiders. Sansar Chand's request was considered favourably. It was agreed to help him against the Gurkhas but on one condition, namely that he must declare Kangra to be a part of Punjab, and surrender the Kangra fort to the Lahore forces. Sansar Chand accepted these terms.

To begin with, the Maharaja ordered all the chiefs of the Kangra region to stop selling provisions to the Gurkha army. He ordered his own troops to cut the Gurkha supply lines with Nepal. The Maharaja arrived in Kangra and demanded admission to the fort. Sansar Chand hesitated and made evasive replies. He said. 'I shall hand over the fort as soon as the Gurkhas are made to withdraw.'

The Maharaja knew that Sansar Chand was not a man of his word. Moreover, the Maharaja was too shrewd to be taken in by Sansar Chand's ruse. Now, it so happened that one of Sansar Chand's sons was the Maharaja's hostage. The Maharaja put him under arrest. This step opened Sansar Chand's eyes. He surrendered the fort. On August 14, 1809, a detachment of the Punjab troops took possession of the Kangra fort.

The Gurkhas were soon short of rations, and hence, in great difficulties. Still they held on stubbornly. The Maharaja waited till they ran out of rations. Then they began to retreat. Thereupon the Maharaja attacked them with full force. Amar Singh Thapa turned back to face the attack. But having been short of rations for many days, the Gurkhas could not stand the strain of hand-to-hand fight against the Punjab infantry. The tall Sikhs, with their long curved swords, fell upon the short-statured Gurkhas, who were armed with their short *khukris*. The Maharaja had been watching the fight from a mound. He mounted his horse and plunged into the fight. The Gurkhas took to their heels.

The Maharaja was greatly impressed by the stubborn resistance offered by the Gurkhas. To honour brave men and reward their deeds of bravery was a major attribute of the Maharaja's character. When the fight with the Gurkhas was over, the Maharaja ordered his men not to chase the defeated brave adversaries. He allowed Amar Singh Thapa time to retire without further molestation and he ordered his own Sardars to help the brave Gurkhas to collect their equipment. Some hill rajas utilized the occasion to plunder the vanquished foe. They were severely rebuked by the Maharaja and made to restore the loot. The Gurkhas returned to their homes. The Gurkha menace to the Punjab was thus ended for ever.

The Maharaja entered the fort of Kangra on December 24, 1809. Among the chiefs who paid homage to him were the rulers of Kangra, Chamba, Noorpur, Kulu and Datarpur, Kotla Jasrata, Basohli, Jaswan, Mandi and Suket.

### END OF THE AFGHAN MENACE

The fort of Attock was in the possession of Jahan Dad Khan. His brother, Ata Muhammad Khan was the governor of Kashmir. Ata Muhammad had been ejected from Kashmir by Wazir Fateh Khan. The Wazir's next victim was to be Jahan Dad Khan. The Maharaja came to know of the Wazir's design. The Maharaja's plan was to make Attock and its neighbourhood a part of the Punjab. If the fort of Attock were to pass into Wazir Fateh Khan's hands, the plan would become difficult of execution. So, in order to prevent the fort from passing into the Wazir's hands, the Maharaja decided to take it into his own possession. He sent his minister Fakir Azizuddin to negotiate with Jahan Dad Khan. Fakir Azizuddin said to him, "You know or should know that Wazir Fateh Khan is after you. If he comes, you will not be able to withstand him. He will turn you out of the fort. You will have nowhere to go. I come with a generous offer from the Maharaja. He will give you a handsome *jagir* in return for the fort".

Jahan Dad Khan accepted the offer and handed over the fort to Fakir Azizuddin.

The Attock fort was considered to be gateway of India. When Wazir Fateh Khan heard that the fort had passed into the Maharaja's hands, he was mad with anger and disappointment. He wrote to the Maharaja asking him to evacuate the fort or face the consequences.

The Maharaja had no intention of obliging the Wazir. He sent more troops to garrison the fort. Wazir Fateh Khan began to incite the tribes in the neighbourhood of Attock and to exhort them to expel the ‘infidels’ from their midst. He himself came up at the head of his troops and surrounded the fort. The Maharaja sent a strong force under the charge of Diwan Mohkam Chand to meet the Wazir. The Punjab forces crossed the river Attock. They came face to face with Wazir Fateh Khan and his Afghan troops. The two armies faced each other without going into action. By then the summer season had set in. Diwan Mohkam Chand then made a clever move. He placed his troops between the Afghans and the river. Finding themselves thus cut off from their supply of water, the Afghans took the initiative. They made repeated charges on the Punjabi forces in their bid to break through to the river. Diwan Mohkam Chand chained his elephant’s legs. This he did to prevent it from running back. The Punjabi lines remained unbroken and the Punjabi infantry repulsed the Afghan assault with their steady fire.

The Punjabis could slake their thirst from the river and come back to the battle. The Afghans, on the other hand, had to fight in the intense heat of July without a drop of water to drink. Hence they turned their attention from the fort to the river. They wanted to reach the banks of the Attock. The Punjabis repulsed the Afghans and kept them away from the river banks. At last, the Afghans were exhausted with thirst and exertion. They broke their ranks and fled. They left their heavy guns and equipments to the victors. One thousand Afghans lay dead on the field.

This was the first victory of the Punjabis against the Afghans. The fort of Attock had been regarded as the sentinel



A Darbar Scene

of India. It had been taken from the Hindu Raja Jaipal by Mahmud Ghaznavi in 1000 A.D. Since then it had remained in the hands of the invaders. Its recapture meant the liberation of Northern India from the Afghan menace.

### CONQUEST OF THE PATHAN CITADEL

The Maharaja was eager to extend his kingdom in the northwest by capturing Peshawar and its neighbourhood. He was waiting for a favourable opportunity to do so. He got it in the summer of 1818. At that time Wazir Fateh Khan of Afghanistan was murdered by Prince Kamran, son of Shah Shuja's brother Mahmud. The Wazir's numerous brothers, who were spread out in different parts of Afghanistan, Peshawar and Kashmir, called for vengeance. So a civil war started in Afghanistan. Each party to the war was anxious to occupy Kabul. Hence the Afghan frontier with the Punjab was left undefended.

The Maharaja sent for Akali Phula Singh to whom the north-western frontier was well known. He questioned him about Attock and its surroundings. Akali Phula Singh replied, 'Attock is like a small island in the midst of a sea of turbulent tribesmen. If the north-western region is to be made secure against the Pathans and Afghans, the frontier will have to be extended to Peshawar. It will be better still to push up the frontier to the entrance of the Khyber Pass. If we should succeed in doing that the close alliance between the Afghans and the Pathan tribesmen will be broken. Then the most important gate way into India will be slammed in the face of the invaders from that direction.'

The Maharaja was much impressed by Akali Phula Singh's words. His resolve to capture Peshawar was

strengthened. He felt that there was no time to lose. The Afghans were then engaged in a civil war. Their south-eastern frontier with the Punjab was left practically undefended. This fact would make his task much easier.

On October 15, 1818, the Maharaja marched out of Lahore at the head of his troops. Among the generals that he had with him were two who knew these lands and the people, and whose names were a terror among the tribes. They were General Hari Singh Nalwa and Akali Phula Singh.

Passing through Rawalpindi and Hassan Abdal, the Darbar troops arrived in the plains of Hazara. From there a survey party was sent across the river Attock, by boat. The main army halted on the eastern bank. It was to cross when a suitable ford could be located by the scouts.

The western side of the river was inhabited by Khattak tribesmen. They ambushed the survey party. When it was still within the Darbar's territory, destroying it completely. The Khattak tribesmen had already paid tribute to the Maharaja, hence, their brutal attack on the Darbar army's survey party was not an act of war. It was an act of treachery and rebellion. Those who had done it had to be punished.

The Maharaja was infuriated on hearing the news. He ordered his troops to get ready to cross the river but it was in high flood. It was seemingly impossible to cross it. The troops were lined up near the bank. The Maharaja shouted aloud 'Khalsaji, let us all pray to God. He can abate the flood; He can tame the river in no time. Let all fix their minds on the Almighty Father and pray.' The Maharaja then prayed to God and Satguru. The troops also prayed. Then he threw a tray full of gold coins into the river as an offering. Then he rode his

elephant into the fast flowing flooded river. According to legend current in the Punjab and the North Western Frontier, as soon as the Maharaja's elephant stepped into the river, the flood subsided. The horsemen plunged their horses into the river and reached the other bank while others swam across.

The Darbar army now fell upon the Khattaks. The latter did not put up much resistance. Their strongholds at Khairabad and Jahangiria were occupied. The Maharaja then pressed on to Naushera.

On hearing the defeat of the Khattaks, Muhammad Khan, the Afghan Governor of Peshawar, lost his heart. He ran away, leaving behind big guns and other war materials in good condition.

The Maharaja entered the famous stronghold of the Pathans on November 19, 1818. He gave strict orders to his soldiers that none was to lay his hand on any person or property.

The next morning, the Maharaja rode on his elephant through the bazars of Peshawar. He was cheered all along the route. It was the first time in seven hundred years that the citizens of Peshawar had seen an Indian conqueror ride through the streets.

The Maharaja stayed in Peshawar for four days. During that time, envoys came from Dost Muhammad Khan and Yar Muhammad Khan, brothers of Wazir Fateh Khan. The envoys made a present of fifty thousand rupees, fifty loads of dry fruit, one hundred good horses, etc. They also delivered a letter from the two brothers. In it they prayed that they be entrusted with the administration of Peshawar. They agreed to

pay a revenue of one lakh rupees a year. They added that they would abide by all orders of the Lahore Darbar, and accept the Darbar's title over the city. The Maharaja accepted the offer. Yar Muhammad Khan was made the Governor of Peshawar.

## TO THE BORDERS OF CHINA AND TIBET

Very soon after returning from Peshawar, the Maharaja began to make plans for an all-out campaign to take Kashmir from the Afghans. Jabbar Khan, the governor of Kashmir, had ruled with an iron hand. He treated the non-Muslims with the utmost cruelty.

Many Hindus were compelled to leave the valley. One such person was Jabbar Khan's own Revenue Minister, Pandit Birbal Dhar. He came to Lahore and advised the Maharaja that it was a good moment to attack and take Kashmir.

Preparations were made for the attack. By April 1819, the Darbar forces assembled at Wazirabad. That place was to serve as the main base of operations and the Maharaja's headquarters.

A column of the Darbar army, under Prince Kharak Singh, advanced up to Baramulla without much resistance, then reached Shupaiyan. Another column of the Darbar army under Misr Diwan Chand, also came up. The two columns were within view of each other. They also came within view of Jabbar Khan with twelve thousand Afghans on the plain of Shupaiyan.

After allowing his troops a few day's rest Misr Diwan Chand quietly surrounded the Afghan host. Next morning, the Darbar's artillery opened fire on the Afghans. Jabbar Khan did

not possess an adequate number of guns. He ordered his cavalry to charge. The Afghan horsemen captured a number of the Darbar army's guns. At this time, Akali Phula Singh and his Akalis fell upon the Afghan horsemen and infantry. The Afghans could not stand the *Nihangs'* charge. They turned and fled to the hills. Jabbar Khan was severely wounded. He barely escaped with his life.

Prince Kharak Singh and Misr Diwan Chand entered Srinagar the next day. The Prince issued strict orders that none was to loot or molest the citizens in any way.

The Maharaja returned to the plains. He first went to Amritsar for thanksgiving then he returned to Lahore on September 22, 1819.

Kashmir was an important acquisition for the Punjab. It fetched seventy lakh rupees a year as revenue. Moreover, it extended the state's frontiers to the borders of China and Tibet.

# 13

## TWO IRREPARABLE LOSSES

AKALI PHULA SINGH

Kashmir was taken by the Maharaja in 1819. Its administration was entrusted to Yar Muhammad Khan. But the Pathan tribesmen did not like to be under the government of Punjabis or their nominees. They rose in open revolt against Yar Muhammad Khan. They began to raise cries of *Jihad*. The chief instigator was Yar Muhammad Khan's elder brother Azim Khan. He aroused the religious sentiments of the Pathans. He proclaimed his intention of liberating the Pathans from the Punjabi infidels' yoke. The result of his campaign was that the whole tribal area began to resound with cries of *Jihad*. In a short time, over twentyfive thousand *Ghazis* (Muslim crusaders) volunteered to fight as the Prophet's soldiers. They were determined to achieve victory or martyrdom.

With these thousands of *Ghazis* Azim Khan advanced towards Peshawar in January 1823. Yar Muhammad Khan left Peshawar and hid himself in the neighbouring hills. Evidently, he was not unwilling to hand over the city to his brother Azim Khan. Azim Khan occupied Peshawar without any difficulty whatsoever.

The Maharaja ordered his army to proceed northwards. Prince Sher Singh and General Hari Singh Nalwa led the advance columns. They crossed the river Attock by means of boat-bridge. They came up to Jahangiria and occupied the fort



Akali Phula Singh  
General

there. The *Ghazis* came up and besieged the fort. Thus Prince Sher Singh and his companions found themselves surrounded on all sides by people thirsting for their blood. The siege operations were conducted by Azim Khan's brother, Dost Muhammad Khan, and Jabbar Khan. This Dost Muhammad Khan was the same man who, along with his brother Yar Muhammad Khan, had been entrusted with the administration of Peshawar. He had vowed to be loyal to the Maharaja.

The Maharaja arrived on the eastern bank of the river Attock. He found that the boat-bridge across the river had been destroyed by the Pathans. The river was in flood. It was impassable. The Pathan snipers made it impossible to make a fresh boat-bridge across the river.

Soon the Maharaja was informed that the Pathans planned to destroy Sher Singh and his men the next day. Something had to be done at once. The river seemed impassable. But nothing daunted the Maharaja. He ordered his soldiers to cross the flooded Attock as best as they could. He himself was the first to plunge his horse into the river. His army followed. The Maharaja and his army were soon in control of the western bank. The *Ghazis* were taken by surprise. They took to their heels. Jahangiria and its garrison were saved.

After retreating from Jahangiria, the Pathans retrenched themselves in the plain outside Naushera. Between Naushera and Peshawar flowed the river Lunda. The army of Azim Khan could join the *Ghazis* at Naushera only after crossing that stream. That army was now approaching the Lunda.

The Maharaja consulted his generals. They advised him to attack and finish off the *Ghazis* in Naushera before Azim Khan's army could come to their aid. He concurred.

Early next morning, a religious gathering was held with Guru Granth Sahib in the midst of the assembly. After the morning service, prayers were offered for the success of the campaign to be started that day. All present took vows to fight to the last and prayed for God's and the Guru's help in fulfilling their vows.

Soon the army was on the march. The Maharaja rode to a mound and took the salute from the troops going into action. As each group passed, raising shouts of *Sat Sari Akal*, the Maharaja acknowledged the salutation by raising his naked sword to his forehead and then he waved it in the direction in which the army was to march.

As this march past was in progress, news was brought to the Maharaja that Azim Khan was approaching the Lunda stream with a huge Afghan army and forty big guns. On hearing this news, the Maharaja proposed that the offensive should be postponed till his General Ventura came up with the Darbar's artillery. He was expected to arrive that very day.

But Akali Phula Singh would not agree to this postponement. He said, "How can we break our word given to the Guru this morning ? Having expressed his resolve before the Guru Granth Sahib to go and fight to the last, no Sikh can turn back. I and my companions will keep our vow. We go into the fight, come what may."

So saying Akali Phula Singh and his *Nihangs* raised shouts of *Sat Sri Akal*, and fell upon the *Ghazis*. The latter came down from the hill where they had taken up their position. They far outnumbered the *Nihangs*, and expected to finish them off in no time. Seeing this, the Maharaja ordered the

rest of his army to advance and fall upon the *Ghazis*.

Akali Phula Singh was in the midst of the severest fighting. A deadly hand-to-hand fight was going on between *Nihangs* and the *Ghazis*. Akali Phula Singh was wounded in the thigh. He could not stand. He bandaged his wound and rode back into the thick of the battle on horseback. Then he was wounded which made him still less capable of wielding any weapon. His horse was shot from under him. He got into a *howdah* and drove an elephant into the midst of the enemy. The *Ghazis* could now see the man who had humbled them so often. They fired at him from all sides. His body was riddled with bullets, but he went on roaring like a lion, till he collapsed on his elephant. The news of his death further infuriated the *Nihangs*. They gave no quarter to the enemy. The *Ghazis* could not stand the *Nihangs'* charge. They became disorganized. At the critical moment, the Darbar cavalry rode into the disorganized masses of the *Ghazis* and transfixes them with their lances.

In the meantime, Azim Khan had come up to the river Lunda on the west. Facing him on the eastern bank was the Darbar artillery under General Ventura. He could not cross the river. He helplessly watched the massacre of the *Ghazis* from the other side of the river. He could not come to their aid. By sunset the *Ghazis* were finished off or made to fly. Azim Khan was too ashamed to show his face to the people of Peshawar. He ran away to Afghanistan.

Three days later, the Maharaja entered Peshawar at the head of his victorious army. The citizens gave him a warm welcome. The city was illuminated at night

A few days thereafter, Yar Muhammad Khan and Dost

Muhammad Khan presented themselves before the Maharaja. They craved his pardon. He forgave them readily. Yar Muhammad Khan was again appointed Governor of Peshawar. The Maharaja then returned to his capital

### GENERAL HARI SINGH NALWA

Peshawar was now in the possession of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Its control and administration had been entrusted to the Afghan chiefs. They paid a stipulated tribute or revenue to the Maharaja. These chiefs had, a number of times, given proof that they were not sincere and trustworthy. The Maharaja felt that, in order to make the North-west Frontier really secure, Peshawar should be brought under his direct control. Accordingly he instructed Hari Singh Nalwa to take over the governorship of Peshawar from the Afghan Governor, Sultan Muhammad. This was done and the city was garrisoned by Punjabi soldiers.

On assuming the new charge, Nalwa directed his attention to taming the semi-savage Pathan tribesmen who inhabited the country surrounding Peshawar. These Pathans had for centuries, persecuted and frightened the Punjabis. They held the Punjabis in utter contempt. Hari Singh Nalwa decided to compel them to change their attitude towards his people. He decided to teach them that the Punjabis were superior to them, and had to be regarded with respect and awe.

He felt that soft or half-hearted measures would be out of place when dealing with the semi-savage Pathan tribesmen. Hence he decided to be ruthless. Whenever the Pathans ambushed any Punjabis or shot at them from hidden places, Hari Singh Nalwa raided the Pathans' villages and destroyed their homes. Within a short time, the name of Hari Singh Nalwa



S. Hari Singh Nalwa  
General

became a terror in the tribal territory. So much so that, to this day, the Pathan women, when they want to frighten their children, say, 'Hush child, Nalwa is coming.'

Another step he took to make the land secure was to build a chain of forts. They were to be within sight of each other. Two of them stood on the entrance of the Khyber Pass. They were Shabkadar and Jamrud. They were fortified with special care. They were placed under the command of the Maharaja's ablest officers. Shabkadar was placed under the command of Lehna Singh Sandhawalia. It had a garrison of one thousand nine hundred. Jamrud, with a garrison of six hundred, was placed under the command of Mohan Singh.

On account of the measures taken by General Hari Singh Nalwa, Dost Muhammad of Kabul became agitated and angry. He concluded that the Maharaja was contemplating an attack on Afghanistan. He hurried towards Peshawar. He addressed insolent letters to the Maharaja. He told him to evacuate Peshawar or be prepared to taste the Afghan sword. The Maharaja wrote back in the same tone. He said that he would welcome a trial of strength between the Afghans and the Punjabis.

Dost Muhammad then applied to the English for help against the Maharaja. But they bluntly refused to help him. Then he raised a cry of *Jihad* or holy war against the 'infidels from the Punjab'. He exhorted Muslims to rise to a man to destroy the Punjabis. He then learnt that the Maharaja was preoccupied with Prince Nau Nihal Singh's marriage and that Hari Singh Nalwa was ill and confined to bed at Peshawar. He thought that this was a good time for him to start operations against the hated Punjabis.

So thinking, he started his campaign. His plan was to isolate the Punjabi garrisons at Shabkadar, Jamrud and Peshawar, so that they would be unable to come to each other's relief. After such isolation, he planned, he would reduce them, one by one.

The first to receive his attention was Jamrud. It was the most advanced outpost, nearest to Afghanistan. It was also the weakest link in the chain of the fortresses built by Hari Singh Nalwa.

Dost Muhammad's first move was to send one detachment of his army to Shabkadar. It was intended to prevent Lehna Singh from going out to aid Mohan Singh. His main army, numbering twentyfive thousand with fifty heavy guns, went and besieged Jamrud. To oppose this huge host, Mohan Singh had only six hundred soldiers and few light guns. The odds against him were very heavy.

With a few hours, the Afghans's heavy guns firing brought down the walls of the fort in many places. Mohan Singh's men dug trenches. They used their muskets with deadly precision and remarkable effect. They were able to hold the Afghans at bay for four days. Then Mohan Singh sent word to Hari Singh Nalwa that he would be unable to hold out much longer. This message was taken to Peshawar by a Sikh woman. Disguised as an Afghan, she stole through the Afghan army and reached Peshawar in a wonderfully short time. As soon as Hari Singh Nalwa got the message, he got up from his sick bed and hurried to Jamrud.

When the Afghans learnt that the terrible Nalwa had risen they were very afraid, at once they raised their siege of Jamrud and took up a position in the valley of Khyber, so as to have a

safe route of escape in case of defeat.

Hari Singh Nalwa drew up his forces in battle formation and waited for the Afghans to attack him. The Afghans were thrice as many as his troops. But he was fully confident of victory. He knew that the Afghan did not possess the guts to withstand his Punjabi soldiers. He waited for seven days. All this time the two armies faced each other without going into action. Hari Singh Nalwa realized that the Afghans were too afraid to attack or engage in battle. Hence, on April 30, 1837, he ordered his troops to advance. The Punjabis drove the Afghans before them as the wind drives dry leaves. They captured eleven Afghan guns.

The Punjabi army then started chasing the retreating Afghans. In the heat of the chase, Hari Singh Nalwa's, column was separated from the main army. Hari Singh Nalwa, riding an elephant, was ahead of his men, leading the attack on the fugitives. Dost Muhammad's son, Muhammad Akbar Khan, was watching the battle from an encampment on a hill. He saw that Hari Singh Nalwa and his men were far ahead of the main army. He swooped down on Nalwa's column. He and his men directed their attack against Hari Singh Nalwa.

In the attack Hari Singh Nalwa was grievously wounded. He was taken back to Jamrud. He knew that his end was approaching. He gave orders to his officers that his death was to be kept a secret until the Afghans were driven beyond the Khyber Pass. This feat was accomplished soon.

An Englishman, Dr. Wood, wrote an account of the battle and General Hari Singh's death. In it he wrote, 'Hari Singh received four wounds: two sabre cuts across his chest, one arrow was fixed in his breast which he deliberately pulled out

himself, and continued to issue orders as before, until he received a gunshot wound in the side, from which he gradually sank and was carried off the field to the fort, where he expired, requesting that his death should not be made known until the arrival of the Maharaja's relief.'

Hari Singh had sent to the Maharaja post haste reports about the hostilities which had broken out in the Peshawar province. In a letter accompanying the earliest of them, he had requested that his soldiers who had been sent for Nau Nihal Singh's marriage be sent back immediately. This report had been sent when the fighting had not yet actually begun.

As a matter of routine, these reports and the letter had been delivered to Dhian Singh. It was his duty to place them before the Maharaja. But out of motives not difficult to guess, he did not put them up before the Maharaja.

Then the news of Nalwa's death arrived. The Maharaja broke down with grief. He shed bitter silent tears; he could not utter a word for some minutes. Then he controlled himself. He enquired from Dhian Singh whether any earlier reports had been received. Dhian Singh told him of the reports and the letter in which Hari Singh had asked for the immediate return of his soldiers. Dhian Singh added that he had not thought it fit to show the reports and the letter to the Maharaja until he was free from his engagements concerning the prince's marriage.

Hearing this, the Maharaja was filled with rage. He rebuked Dhian Singh in stern words. He said, "you acted very wrongly. Peshawar and Hari Singh were more important to me than anything else. If I had been informed in time, I would have sent at once not only his soldiers, but also a large army to suppress the rising there. If you had shown me the reports and

the letter immediately on their receipt, the life of my brave and seasoned general could have been saved. You have done a terrible wrong and a very damaging disservice to the Punjab Darbar. You are responsible for causing us an irreparable loss."

Then he started towards Jamrud. In one day he rode from Lahore to Jehlam, a distance of one hundred and sixty five kilometres. By the time he reached Jamrud, all the Afghans had been driven beyond the Khyber pass.

The Afghans had failed to capture Shabkadar and Peshawar. They had been made to retreat from Jamrud. They had been driven beyond the Khyber Pass. Still, they were in high spirits, for they said, 'What if the battle is lost ? We have killed Nalwa who was worth a hundred and twenty five thousand men.'

## SOME ANECDOTES

### EQUAL JUSTICE FOR ALL

Once a person from Gujranwala came to the Maharaja and made the following complaint.

'Your general, Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa, has a *haveli* which adjoins mine in Gujranwala. Recently he has windened it by encroaching upon my land. He has high-handedly and wrongfully walled in, and added to his *haveli* a few hundred square yards of my land. I pleaded with him and his men. Puffed up with power, they have paid no heed to my entreaties. I have come to my benevolent *Sarkar*, who is known to be just and a protector of the weak. I crave for justice.'

The Maharaja acted at once. He visited the place and made enquiries. He found that the complaint was genuine, that his general had, in fact, forcibly occupied that man's land. He ordered the wall to be demolished and shifted back to where it justly should have been.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh had given strict instructions to all his officers that full and equal justice must be given to all people, high or low that no leniency should be shown to an offender on account of his belonging to a high family or holding a high rank. His officers, with rare exceptions, obeyed the in-

structions in letter and spirit. Here is an instance which is one out of hundreds.

Diwan Sawan Mal was the Governor of Multan. Once, a poor peasant came to him with a complaint. He said, 'One of your sardars has used up my green crops to feed horses. He has paid me nothing by way of a price. I am a poor man. Help me, dear venerable Diwan Sahib.'

Diwan sawan Mal called up all his courtiers and sardars. He told the peasant to recognize out of them the one who had wronged him. The peasant pointed at one of them. The man thus pointed out was the Diwan's eldest son, Ram Das. The Diwan ordered him to be put in prison. The orders were promptly carried out as desired by the Diwan.

The peasant later learnt that the person punished was Diwan Sawan Mal's son. He went to the Diwan and prayed that Ram Das be pardoned. But the Diwan did not accept his appeal. He said, 'If I don't punish a son of mine who has committed a crime, with what face can I punish other people's sons. Ram Das must remain in prison as ordered. "Equal justice for all" is our *Sarkar's* motto for us all.'

The Maharaja heard of this incident. He was immensely pleased with Diwan Sawan Mal's conduct. He conferred further honours and *Jagir* on him.

#### LOOKED UPON ALL 'WITH ONE EYE'

(1)

Once the Muslim residents of a village came to the Maharaja with a complaint against their Hindu and Sikh fellow-

villagers. They said, 'The Hindu and Sikh residents of our village don't let us say our *Azan* or Muslim call to prayer. They are thus acting against your declared policy of full religious freedom to followers of all religions. We have come to our dear *Sarkar* for justice. They are depriving us of our religious freedom. They should be made to desist from doing that.'

The Maharaja summoned some leading Hindu and Sikh residents of that village. He told them of the complaint brought against them. He desired them to let him know what they had to say in that connection. They replied, 'Gracious Singh Sahib, may the Guru be still more kind to you ! If these good men look back in history a little, they will realize that they have no justification for their hue and cry against us. Under the rule of these people's co-religionists, we, Hindus and Sikhs, were denied religious freedom altogether. We could not perform our religious worship and rites. We were forbidden to ring bells, blow conch-shells or trumpets, and to sing our hymns even in our temples. Now, with the grace of our Gurus, we have Sikh rule in the Punjab. These people must get the same treatment under the Sikh rule as we got under the Muslim rule. It is just a case of tit for tat, our gracious Singh Sahib.'

The Maharaja said, 'You are labouring under a grievous misconception. What you have here in the Punjab now is not Sikh rule but Punjabi rule. You should all regard yourself as Punjabi first, and Sikhs, Hindus, or Muslims, afterwards. Far more than being a Sikh, Hindu or Muslim, is the fact of being a Punjabi. All should have equal rights, equal freedom, equal opportunity, and equal justice. But by the way, what is your objection to their *Azan* ?'

The Hindu and Sikh leaders said, 'The same as they and

their coreligionist rulers had against our conch-shells, trumpets, and bells. We hate to hear the very sound of their *Azan*. We have to shut our ears with our fingers when their *mullah* cries aloud at the top of his shrill sharp voice, from the top of his building. Our religious sentiments are hurt by the *Azan*. He says it not once or twice, but five times a day, beginning with one early in the morning, and ending with one quite late in the evening. We cannot tolerate it.'

The Maharaja said, 'I don't like anyone's religious sentiments to be hurt.'

Then he turned to the Muslim complainants and said, 'Why does your *mullah* cry aloud at the top of his voice from the top of his building.'

They replied, 'The *Azan* is a call to us for prayers. By crying aloud as he does, the *mullah* tells us that it is the time for *namaz* or prayer, and that all Muslims should assemble in the mosque, or say their prayers wherever they be at the time.'

The Maharaja said, 'But suppose we could devise another method of telling the Muslims of your village that it is the time for *Namaz*. Will that serve the purpose?'

The Muslims replied, 'If such be our just and gracious *Sarkar's* pleasure, and if it satisfies our friends here, it will serve our purpose all right.'

The Maharaja turned to the Sikhs and Hindus before him and said, 'I hereby forbid the *Azan* in your village; but on one condition. You must take upon yourselves the responsibility of informing every Muslim of your village, wherever he be at home or in the fields, that it is the time for *Namaz*. You will

have to do that five times a day as the *mullah* does with his *Azan*. You must be punctual at all times. You must never fail to inform all Muslims of your village in time, that it is the time for *Namaz*. Do you agree?"

The Hindus and Sikhs cried out. 'That is an impossible task for us. How can we run about, five times a day to the houses and fields of these people, informing them that it is the time for *Namaz*? We cannot take up that responsibility.'

The Maharaja said, 'Then let their *mullah* continue to inform them in his own way. More, you must all live as brothers, as sons of the same soil, as Punjabis.'

The Hindus and Sikhs had to yield. The Muslims expressed their gratitude to the Maharaja. They all-Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims-promised to live in peace and friendship, and respect each other's religious sentiments.

(2)

Once a Muslim calligrapher came to Lahore. He had spent many years in making a copy of the holy Quran. He had taken it to all Muslim princes of India, one after the other. All of them admired the work. But none of them came forward to give him an adequate price for his labours. He then came to Lahore, intending to sell it to Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Foreign Minister, Fakir Azizuddin. He presented it to the said Minister. The latter praised the work, but expressed his inability to pay for it. It was beyond his means, he said.

The Maharaja overheard what passed between them. He summoned the calligrapher to his presence. He asked him to give the book to him. The calligrapher presented the Quran to

the Maharaja who respectfully pressed the Holy Book against his forehead. Then he scrutinized the writing with his single right eye. He was impressed with the excellence of the calligrapher's work. He bought it for his private collection.

Some time afterwards Fakir Azizuddin asked the Maharaja why he had paid such a high price for a book for which he, as a Sikh, could have no use. The Maharaja replied, 'God intended me to look upon all religions with one eye. That is why He took away the light from the other.'

## KINDNESS AND GENEROSITY

(1)

It was the Maharaja's practice that, when famine occurred in any part of his kingdom, he made arrangements for free distribution of foodgrains among the affected people. Each family got its quota according to the number of its members. It was his custom to visit the distribution centres without informing any body, in order to see that all was going on well and properly.

Once, famine occurred in Lahore and its suburbs. Centres were started for free distribution of foodgrains. The Maharaja, disguised as a rustic, went to see one of such centres. At a little distance from the centre, he saw a blind old man and a young child. A load of foodgrains lay between them on the ground. The Maharaja approached them and said, 'What is the matter, brother ?'

The old man said, 'As you see, brother, I am old and blind. This boy here is my grandson. His father is dead. I have another grandson and three grand-daughters. Then there

are their mother and grandmother. Thus we are a family of eight. We are *dhabis* (washermen) living at Muzang. We came here to get foodgrains being distributed free by our generous and kind *Sarkar*. His man gave us our quota for eight persons. The load is too heavy for us. We have a long distance to go. How to carry this load there, is my problem. I wait and pray to God to send some strong kind-hearted man to help me.'

The Maharaja said, 'Then God has answered your prayer. I am going to Muzang myself. I shall carry the load to your house. Dear child, lead your grandfather and me to your house. Will you ? Little boy.'

The old man blessed the kind-hearted stranger and thanked God for his having heard and answered his prayer. The Maharaja lifted the load and placed it on his head. Thus loaded, he followed the blind old man and his little grandson. He carried the load all the way from near the fort to Muzang.

He put down the load at the *dhobi's* door and turned to go. The old man thanked and blessed him sincerely and profusely. The Maharaja told him, 'Elder brother', I have only done my duty. Farewell,'

Just then a soldier in uniform came that way. He recognized the Maharaja in spite of the disguise. He saluted him and said, 'Jai *Sarkar*,'

The Maharaja placed his finger on his lips as a sign to the soldier to keep mum. Then he quickly walked away to visit some other similar centre.

Because of his open-handed generosity, Maharaja Ranjit Singh was generally called *paras* or Philosopher's stone.

Poor men of no consequence, on coming in touch with him, became rich and important, just as base metals, on touching *paras*, were believed to become gold.

Once he was riding on horseback through the streets of Lahore. Crowds of people cheered him as he went along showering gold and silver coins this way and that. An old woman pushed through the crowd of spectators until she got close to the Maharaja's horse. She held an iron pan (*tawa*), in her hand. Its bottom was coated with soot. She wanted to go up to the Maharaja. His bodyguard stopped her. She began to beseech and cry. The Maharaja heard her cry. He told the guard to let her come up. She was soon by his side, with iron *tawa* in her hand.

Then he said, 'Grandma, what do you want ? Tell me, quickly'.

The old woman said, 'I want to do this.' So saying, she began to rub his foot with the black, soot-covered iron pan. Some soot stuck to his foot. The guard took this action of hers as an insult to the Maharaja. He was about to push her away. The old woman cried, 'Let me finish, my child!' The Maharaja told the guard not to molest her. Then he said, 'Grandma what have you done? What do you want to finish ? And why ?'

She replied, 'Gracious Sarkar, people say that our Maharaja is *paras*. It is also said that if iron touches *paras*, it turns into gold. I am an old woman, with none to support me. I heard of your approach. I wanted to avail myself of this opportunity. I took up the only piece of iron I had in my house. I wanted to get it changed into gold, so that I may have enough for my needs. Hence it was that I tried to rub your feet with

this iron pan. But your guard does not let me finish this process, and achieve my objective. O *Paras*, permit me to touch your foot with the iron pan, so that it may become gold.'

The Maharaja was much amused. He burst into a hearty laugh. 'Grandma, I did not know it.' Then he ordered his treasurer to give her gold equal in weight to the weight of her iron plate. His orders were carried out at once. The poor old woman became rich and went home, blessing the *Paras* Maharaja.

### SWEET HUMILITY

Once the Maharaja happened to commit some lapse which constituted a breach of *Khalsa Rehat* or Rules of Conduct for the *Khalsa*. Some time thereafter, he came to Amritsar to pay homage at the sacred shrine. Akali Phula Singh used to stay at Amritsar and look after the gurdwara. He learnt of the Maharaja's intended visit to the sacred temple. With a drawn sword in his hand, he ran to the entrance of the temple called the *Darshni Deohri*. He reached it before the Maharaja could do so. He stood in the Maharaja's way and said, 'Stop. A Sikh who has broken the *Khalsa Rehat* as you have done, cannot be allowed to enter the sacred temple.'

The Maharaja stepped back a few paces, folded his hands and said in a humble tone. 'I admit my lapse, I beg the Guru's *Sangat* (congregation) to pardon me. I am prepared to suffer gladly any penalty that the *Sangat* may impose upon me for this lapse'

After consultation with the Sikh congregation, Akali Phula Singh announced the following penalty. 'The Maharaja's arms should be bound behind his back to the trunk

of a tamarind (*Imli*) tree that grows in front of the Akal Takht, and he should receive twenty one whip-strokes to his body.'

The Maharaja, on hearing the *Sangat's* verdict, bowed his head, went up to the tamarind tree and stood near it with his arms behind him, ready to be bound to the tree and whipped. A sturdy young *Akali* stood nearby, with a whip in his uplifted hand. He was looking at Akali Phula Singh and waiting for a signal from him. The Lion of the Punjab was standing with his arms bound behind him to the tree. His head was bowed in respectful acceptance of the verdict given by the Guru's *Sangat*. He was thus waiting for the whipman's strokes, watched by a crowd of people who were his subjects. The sight was most touching, indeed. Tears filled the eyes of all spectators.

Then Akali Phula Singh said aloud, 'O Guru Khalsa the Maharaja is willing to bear the penalty imposed on him. See, there he stands, ready to receive the strokes. He is repentant. This is enough. I appeal to the Guru Khalsa to pardon him. If all present agree, let them shout *Sat Sri Akal*.'

Loud shouts of *Sat Sri Akal* were raised from all sides. The Maharaja was unbound. He was administered baptism afresh at the *Akal Takht*. Then he was allowed to enter the sacred temple.

## FAITH AND DEVOTION

(1)

In 1826, the Nizam of Hyderabad, Deccan, sent to Maharaja Ranjit Singh an extremely beautiful and costly canopy as a present. Supported on silver poles it was put up on a plot in the Shalimar Gardens. At that time, the Maharaja was cele-

brating the annual Vasant festival there. A big darbar was to be held there. Accompanied by his courtiers and Sardars, the Maharaja came to that place. Stepping under it, he looked up at the beautiful, costly canopy overhead. At once he stepped back from under it. So did also the courtiers and Sardars who had gone under it along with him. He said, 'This canopy is too grand for me. It is fit to adorn the *darbar* of the *Sachcha Patshah*, the true king. I am not fit to sit under it. It is fit only for the Guru's *Sangat* (Sikh congregation) that gathers at the sacred temple in the city founded by Guru Ram Das. Let it be presented to that holy temple. Take it down and send it there.'

His orders were obeyed. The canopy till 1984 was placed in the *Toshakhana* of the Golden Temple, Amritsar and used to be spread over the Holy Scripture, *Guru Granth Sahib*, on Great religious occasions. The canopy was destroyed in the Indian Army Action on 8.6.1984 at the time of "Operation Blue Star".

The Maharaja yearned to meet someone who had seen Guru Gobind Singh 'with his own eyes.' He was eager that such a one should describe to him the Guru's person and personal appearance. 'It will be a blessing and great pleasure,' said he, to meet and talk to such a blessed grand old person.

He sent instructions to all his officers in all places to try to find out some such person. The search was successful at last. An old Muslim, aged well over a hundred years, was found who had seen Guru Gobind Singh. He was brought to Lahore by means of special comfortable conveyance. He was brought before the Maharaja. The very sight of the aged blessed man sent a thrill of joy through the Maharaja's heart and frame. He got up from his seat, ran to meet him, hugged him, and planted several kisses on his eyes, saying, 'Blessed are these eyes of yours with which you saw my Master, Guru Gobind Singh. Blessed are you who saw him with these very eyes.'

The Maharaja touched the old man's feet most reverentially, wiped off dust from those feet, and applied it to his eyes and forehead. Then he went round the grand old man a number of times, as one goes round a sacred person or place. He kept the man as his honoured guest in his palace for several days.

Whenever the Maharaja desired the old man to describe the Guru's person and personal appearance, the latter would go into a trance, with eyes closed and head bowed. Then coming to himself he would say, 'The Guru's face shone with such glorious light that it dazzled the beholders' eyes. All I can recollect is that his arms reached well below his knees. I have seen none other with arms so long. Have you seen one, Gracious Sarkar?'

After several weeks, the old man was bidden respectful farewell. He was given a large sum in cash and a number of rich presents. He was then seated on a well decorated elephant and sent home. The Maharaja and his courtiers walked by his side beyond the gates of the fort.

The great Maratha leader, Hulkar, was defeated by the British Commander, Lord Lake. Hulkar and his Rohilla confederate, Amir Khan, fled to Amritsar. They intended to seek help from the Sikhs. Hulkar visited the sacred temple and made rich offerings. This he did in order to earn the Sikhs' good opinion.

Lord Lake pursued them and came up to the Beas with his army. Both Hulkar and Lake sent messengers to Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who was then at Multan. Hulkar prayed for help against the English. Lord Lake requested the Maharaja not to give any help to his enemy.

The Maharaja was faced with a complex problem. He realized the gravity of the situation. He sent word to all his principal Sardars to join him at Amritsar. He wanted to seek their advice.

A meeting of the *Sarbat Khalsa* was called at the Akal Takht. It was attended by the leading Sikh chiefs and dignitaries. Both sides of the case were presented. On the one side were the refugees, Hulkar and Amir Khan. They had sought shelter and protection. It was a matter of honour for the Khalsa to protect them, not to send them away disappointed. On the other side were the English who demanded that the Maharaja should expel Hulkar from the Punjab. 'If he is not expelled', they added, 'we shall attack him wherever he may be. The Anglo-Maratha conflict will then be extended to the Maharaja's domains. The consequences will be serious for the Punjab and Punjabis'

The problem was knotty in the extreme. No unanimous decision could be arrived at. At last the Maharaja decided to have resort to the Guru. 'Let the Guru decide for us,' said he. He went to the sacred temple and prayed for guidance. Then he took two slips of paper. He had the name of Lord Lake written on one of them and that of Hulkar on the other. He folded them several times and placed them before Guru Granth Sahib. Then he prayed, 'O Satguru, guide me. Give me your orders. Whose request should I accept? Which side should I support?' Then he picked up one of the slips. It bore the name of Lord Lake.

So the Guru had decided for him. He refused to become involved in the Anglo-Maratha conflict. He decided to mediate for a settlement between the two. He was successful. Hulkar

departed in peace and in high spirits.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh had so thoroughly imbibed the Sikh spirit of democracy, that he never claimed any superiority for himself. He used to say that the kingdom really belonged to the Guru; that he was only its watchman. He ever remembered Guru Nanak's words- '*bhullan ander sabh ko, abhulla Guru Kartar*'- Everyone is liable to err, only the Creator is infallible. Consequently, he was ever ready and willing to admit his error. He was ever open to correction and conviction.

# 15

## LAST DAYS

In August 1835, the Maharaja fell seriously ill. He caught a chill and had a stroke from which he recovered gradually.

Early in 1837, he had a second and more serious stroke. His whole right side was affected. Its effects lasted for nearly six months.

The third stroke, from which he could not recover, was brought about by the strain of festivities at Ferozepur in honour of Lord Auckland's visit. On the eve of the Christmas of 1838, the Maharaja was taken violently ill. For the next five days he hovered between life and death. But by the New Year, he was a bit better and was taken to Lahore. The stroke completely deprived him of his power of speech. He had to communicate by signs.

By February 1839, his health had improved a bit. He went to Amritsar to pray for his health. He gave away large sums for charity. He made rich offerings at the shrines of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. There was a little improvement, but his condition continued to cause anxiety.

The winter passed into summer. The summer's heat made the Maharaja more restless than ever before. By the end of May, he had no doubt in his mind that his days were numbered. Prayers for his recovery were held in mosques, temples

and gurdwaras.

The Maharaja's condition went on getting worse and worse. He was now sure he was dying. His last act was that of a dying soldier. He summoned his courtiers to his bed-side. He gave away to them swords, shields, lances, pistols, and matchlocks with his own hands. The courtiers wept bitterly and loudly as they took the gifts. The Maharaja tried to console them, but he himself broke down many times.

On June 26, he became unconscious. All hopes of his recovery were given up. The end came on the evening of June 27, 1839 corresponding to Asar 15, 1896. By a curious coincidence, it was just on this day (Asar 15) exactly forty years earlier, that he had entered Lahore as a victor.

Although Maharaja Ranjit Singh is no more, and his dust returned to dust over a century ago, yet he lives in the memory of the people, and in the songs of the youths and maidens of the country as a maker of the Punjab and as a National Hero of the Land of Five Rivers.

## Section - II

### 1

### END OF SIKH EMPIRE

### (1839 - 1849)

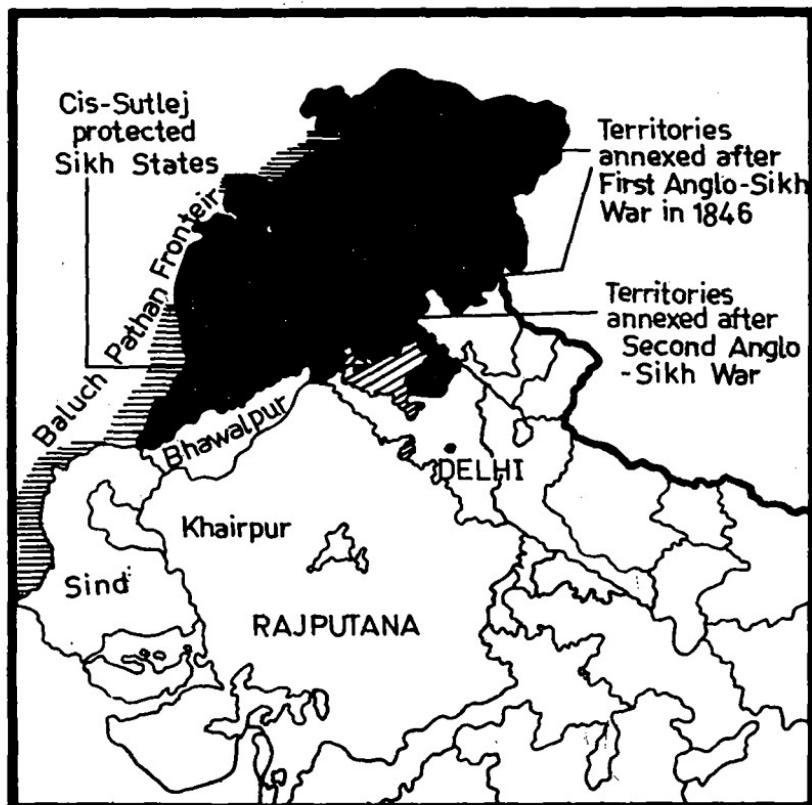
Maharaja Ranjit Singh died on 27th June, 1839 and almost immediately the cherished ideal of a strong Sikh state began to dissolve. Ranjit Singh's peaceful tactics lapsed and almost at once the Sikhs resorted to political killings. His son Kharak Singh succeeded him. However, within a short period of ten years, the Sikhs lost their empire because of treachery and killings, one by one, of the five Sikh princes—Kharak Singh, Nau Nihal Singh, Sher Singh, Kashmira Singh, Pashaura Singh—all sons of Ranjit Singh. Infant prince Dalip Singh was made Maharaja in December 1844 under the regency of his mother Rani Jindan. Because of intrigues in the Lahore Darbar, the army became restive and indisciplined. Soon the Sikhs were at war with the British which they lost.

After the first Anglo-Sikh war in 1845-46, the British curtailed the Sikh empire by annexing Sikh territories east of river Beas, rupees one crore was levied as indemnity and Kashmir, taken by Ranjit Singh in 1819, was annexed by the British which was later sold to Gulab Singh Dogra for Rs. 75 lakh. Sikh independence, was preserved. Infant prince Dalip Singh was maintained as Maharaja, but a British resident was stationed at Lahore and British troops were posted in Punjab as an insurance against anarchy.

Because of continued intrigue and restlessness, the British deprived Rani Jindan of all power in Dec. 1846 and set up a regency council of eight Ministers and Chiefs and this regency

council was to be directed by the British resident.

Because of arrogance of British resident and the replacement of Rani Jindan by the Regency Council it appeared a calculated insult to Sikh monarchy. It was also rumoured that further attacks on the Sikh way of life were on the way. This led to revolt by Sikh troops which resulted into second Anglo-Sikh war in 1848-49. The Sikhs lost the war again. After the Second Anglo-Sikh war the remaining portion of the Sikh empire was formally annexed on 21st March, 1849. The regency council was disbanded and infant Dalip Singh was put under a British guardian. He remained



■ Territories of Maharaja Ranjit Singh

in Lahore till 1850 and was then removed to Allahabad. There he grew up as a young British gentleman and in 1854 was taken to England where he bought a country estate and married a British girl. The British took charge of the Sikh kingdom, absorbed Sikhs in the British army, restored order and thereafter British and Sikhs lived side by side for about a century.

The princely Sikh states of Patiala, Nabha, Faridkot and Jind which did not form part of Ranjit Singh's empire because in 1809 they had sought and obtained British protection against Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Kapurthala, having all helped the British in conquering the Sikh empire during the Anglo-Sikh wars remained in existence under British protection till the end of the British rule in India in 1947.

The Sikhs suffered defeat from the British because their army was led by traitors and Maharani Jindan, mother and regent of infant prince Dalip Singh, was surrounded by insincere advisors who were in league with the cunning Britishers.

The lesson we learn from this chapter of Sikh history is that disunity, jealousy and greed ruin a brave and respectable community, and illustrates the old proverb : "United we stand, divided we fall".

## SIKHS UNDER THE BRITISH (1849 - 1947)

From 1849 to 1947 is a long period of nearly a hundred years. During this period there were several religious reforms and political movements undertaken by the Sikhs. The religious reform laid emphasis on the purity of the Sikh way of life and rendering service to the community. To meet the educational and cultural needs of the community they established Chief Khalsa Dewan. Its main achievement was opening of several Khalsa High Schools in rural areas and establishment of premier institution of higher learning called Khalsa College of Amritsar. On political front the Sikhs played a very prominent role in the freedom struggle for liberation of India from the British rule.

### **Contribution of the Sikhs in the Freedom Movement**

The Sikh immigrants in U.S.A. started a Ghadar Party in 1913 with the purpose of ending British rule in India. They started a paper named *Ghadar* in the same year. Several of them sailed to India to stir up rebellion in every corner of India. This movement however failed and after trial in the court, several were hanged or sentenced to life imprisonment and few to shorter terms of imprisonments. This happened in 1915.

The first world war (1914-18) also brought more strain and suffering. At the end of the war, it had been expected that prices and cost of living would come down, but that hope also proved false. With a view to promptly suppressing disorders in wartime, the government armed itself with drastic powers to deal with trouble makers.

The general wave of anger against the foreign government helped to create communal harmony. In the past there were Hindu-Muslim clashes at the time of *Ram Naumi* festival. This time on 9th April, 1919 in Amritsar, Muslims joined Hindu procession and Hindu leaders were allowed to speak from the pulpit of mosques. All this was a matter of concern to British as it offered an enormous challenge to their policy of "Divide and Rule". The government took speedy action and arrested a Hindu leader Satyapal and a Muslim leader Saifuddin Kitchlew next day. This led to demonstrations and a crowd of people were fired upon by police killing 10 persons. The crowd became violent and in retaliation killed five Englishmen.

On the other hand the local congress leaders had already announced that a meeting will be held on Baisakhi day, 13th April, 1919 at *Jallianwala Bagh* in Amritsar at 4 P.M. Sir Michael O'Dwyer, Lt. Governor of Punjab, decided to take quick and effective action to crush the fast growing turmoil. Brigadier General R.E.H. Dyer was ordered to proceed to Amritsar and restore order. On 13th April a proclamation was issued prohibiting all meetings. Inspite of that there was a gathering of about 20,000 people at *Jallianwala Bagh*. General Dyer ordered firing on un-armed people. 1300 people died and about the same number were wounded. Out of those killed, 799 were Sikhs. Martial law was proclaimed in parts of Punjab on 15th April. In the seven weeks that the Punjab remained under Martial Law, nearly 1200 were killed and at least 3600 wounded, the greater number of them being Sikhs. The effects of *Jallianwala Bagh* massacre was that the gulf between the ruler and the ruled was widened.

Udham Singh was present in the *Jallianwala Bagh* on that historic Baisakhi day where he received a bullet wound in his right arm. He was so deeply moved by that event that he took a



Uddham Singh

solemn oath to punish the main culprit. This tragedy became the turning point of his life. Soon after he left for Africa and from there to USA where he became interested in revolutionary activities. On receiving an invitation from Bhagat Singh, he returned to India with 25 companions and arms. On reaching

Lahore, he was arrested for being in possession of arms. He was tried and sentenced to four years rigorous imprisonment.

In 1932 he was released and the following year he went to Germany and from there he proceeded to London where he joined an engineering course. His real object was very different. He purchased a revolver. For a long time he waited for a suitable opportunity to punish Sir Michael O'Dwyer, who was responsible for killing so many Indians at Amritsar.

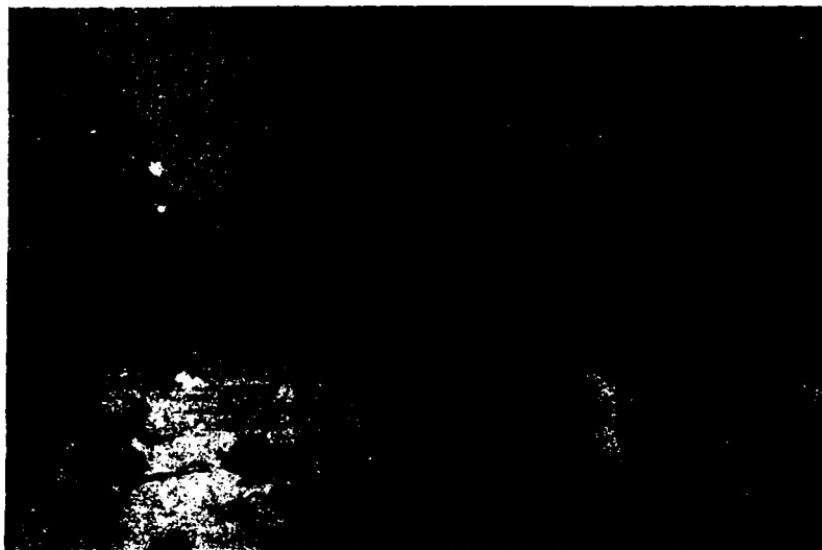
At last the long-awaited opportunity came on 13th March, 1940. On that day, he confronted his victim in the Caxton Hall and fired at him. Sir Michael O'Dwyer was hit twice and died instantaneously. Udham Singh did not move from his place and shouted "I have achieved my long cherished objective." He was sentenced to death on 11th June, 1940 and hanged on 13th June, 1940. He was then 41 years old.

### **Gurdwara Reform Movement / Akali Movement**

Following the *Jallianwala Bagh* massacre, there was the *Nankana Sahib* holocaust in February 1921. This was as a sequel to Gurdwara reform movement which was started to remove the proprietary control of the Gurdwaras by the priests, to bring them under democratic administration, and to conduct worship and missionary work according to Sikh traditions. The Gurdwara Reform Movement more popularly known as the Akali Movement, reached its zenith in the period from 1920 to 1925.

The *Mahant* (Priest) in retaliation butchered 130 Sikhs in the precincts of the Gurdwara with full support of the government. Ultimately the government had to give in. As a result of the Sikh struggle for the management and control of the Gurdwaras by Sikh-Sangat, SGPC (Shiromani Gurdwara Prabhandak Committee) was formed in April 30, 1921.

Next the government passed *Seditious Activity Act* and put a ban on wearing of *Kirpan* (sword) and black turban which the



### Nankana Sahib

sikhs were doing as a protest. Those doing so were badly beaten and women were molested by police.

Some time later in the year 1922, the Sikhs had to start *Guru-Ka-Bagh Morcha* because they were prevented from cutting wood from land surrounding the Gurdwara which they claimed to be their right. The Sikhs started sending jathas every day who were mercilessly beaten by the police. However, government had to accede to their demand at the end.

Then there was *Jaito Morcha* in 1923, because the government arrested Maharaja of Nabha who supported Akalis to free Gurdwaras from corrupt priests of the Gurdwaras in his princely state of Nabha. The S.G.P.C. sent a jatha of 25 Sikhs to start *Akhand Path* in the Gurdwara. The government arrested all of them. Thereafter Sikhs started the *morcha* by courting peaceful arrests to assert their right to prayer and holding religious gatherings. Here also the government ordered the army to fire and

100 sikhs died on the spot and 200 were injured. Ultimately government relented and allowed the Sikhs to hold the *Akhand Path* in the Gurdwara.

### Babbar Akalis

The callous indifference exhibited by the government towards the Sikhs while dealing with the above most inhuman incidences, made them realise that the non-violence policy had failed. This resulted in the emergence of *Babbar Akali* movement in 1921, who wanted to avenge the killings.

For the Babbars, the creed of non-violence was discarded and that of armed resistance and attack was pursued relentlessly. They were taught how to evade and resist, to carry on active propaganda against the government, to single out and liquidate informers. For them to die fighting for a righteous cause, was far more honourable than being hanged.

Special mention may be made of *Sardar Bhagat Singh* - the greatest Indian revolutionary and martyr.

He was born on September 27, 1907. He received his early education in his village primary school. After passing the fifth-class examination of that school, he joined the DAV School, Lahore, in 1916. This institution was a centre for seditious activity. In response to Mahatma Gandhi's call for non-cooperation and a boycott of all educational institutions in 1921, Bhagat Singh left his school, and joined the newly started National College, Lahore. Subsequently he refused to marry or be tied down by the need to earn a living. In early 1924 he went to Kanpur where he met other Bengali revolutionaries like B.K. Dutt and Chandar Shekhar Azad. At his father's request he returned to the Punjab in 1925. He organised revolutionary activities in the Punjab, Delhi and U.P.

In October 1927, Bhagat Singh was arrested for his subversive activities and bound in the sum of rupees 60,000, which did

not deter him from continuing his revolutionary programme. In July 1928, prominent revolutionaries of India decided to accentuate their activities. They held a meeting on September 28, at Kotla Ferozeshah in Delhi. Bhagat Singh was one of the meeting's key figures.

In October 1928, the country was in the grip of 'British out, Simon out' agitation. Lajpat Rai, one of the Chief exponents of extremism then organised a procession to register the protest of people of Lahore against the Simon Commission. Bhagat Singh and his co-workers were in the front of the procession.

The police used force to disperse the marchers. A brutal police attack on Lajpat Rai caused his death on the 17th November, 1928. The blows struck at Lajpat Rai infuriated Bhagat Singh against the high handed attitude of the authorities. Bhagat Singh determined to avenge Lajpat Rai's death by shooting Scott, supdt. of Police, Lahore and other British officials responsible for the deed. On December 17, 1928, he shot down J.P. Saunders, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Lahore, just outside the police station near the DAV College. Bhagat Singh had mistaken him for Scott.

After that Bhagat Singh went into the DAV College Hostel, cut his hair and shaved his beard and made a dramatic escape from Lahore travelling to Calcutta in the guise of a rich Hindu accompanied by his wife and servant.

In 1928 Bhagat Singh attended a Congress session in Calcutta. There he joined Jatinder Nath Dass, who agreed to train him in bomb-making. After learning this, he left Calcutta and started a bomb factory at Agra where he and his associates planned further agitation against British rule in India. Having no faith in Mahatma Gandhi's programme of non-violence, the revolutionaries decided to attract the attention of the people by throwing bombs in the Central Assembly Hall, Delhi. Accordingly, on April 8, 1929, Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt threw two bombs in

the floor of the House while the Assembly was in session. The explosion created an enormous blast but no one was hurt. There was utter confusion in the Assembly. Later, Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt surrendered themselves to the police.

Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt were then tried by the Sessions Judge who commented that 'these persons used to enter the court with the cries of "Long live revolution". In fact, the slogan Inquilab Zindabad (Long live Revolution) was coined by Bhagat Singh. On June 12, 1929, the Judge gave a judgement sentencing them to transportation for life. Bhagat Singh was sent to the Mianwali Jail and B.K. Dutt to the Lahore Central Jail. Later Bhagat Singh was brought to Lahore, where he was tried in another case called Lahore Conspiracy Case.

What was this Conspiracy case about? We have said already that, on December 17, 1928, Saunders was shot dead at Lahore. The police investigation had gone on for several months. Several young men had been arrested and a case for murder of Saunders and for a conspiracy against the Government had been made out against them. On July 10, 1929 Bhagat Singh and others were charged in the case and accordingly Bhagat Singh, Raj Guru and Sukhdev were sentenced to death and hanged on 23 March, 1931. Bhagat Singh was 23 years old at that time, but had lived long enough to become a legend and source of inspiration to all future Indian freedom fighters.

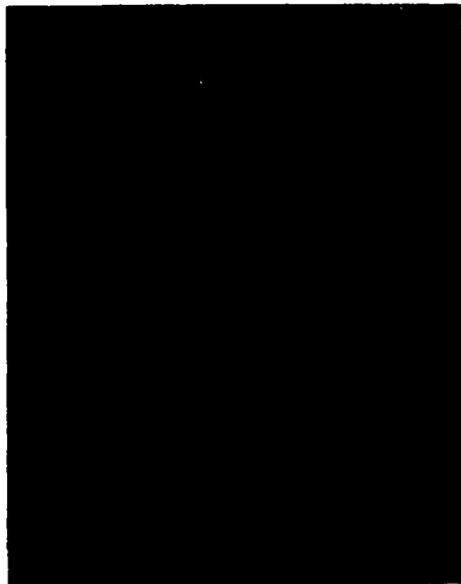
Mahatma Gandhi stated thus, 'There has never been within living memory, so much romance round any life as had surrounded that of Bhagat Singh. None of the age of Bhagat Singh



**Sardar Bhagat Singh**  
(27-9-1907 to 23-3-1931)



In disguise after shooting Saunders,  
DSP, Lahore on 17 Dec. 1928. He  
was in this form only for a short  
period.



Some time before execution in jail.

ever earned so much fame and affection from his countrymen as he did."

It should also be stressed that Bhagat Singh came of a staunch Sikh family and was a *Keshadhari* Sikh until to the day he shot Saunders down. Only after the shooting incident, to disguise himself did he have to cut his hair and shave off his beard. While in jail, he again kept his hair uncut like all Sikhs.

### Sikhs Enter Politics

Soon after Jallianwala Bagh massacre, the nationalist Sikhs formed a political organisation of their own in 1919 and called it the *Central Sikh League*. Having thus entered into the political arena they joined hands with the Indian National Congress in the cause of their country's liberation. Baba Kharak Singh, President of Central Sikh League, invited Mahatma Gandhi to attend their second meeting in Lahore on 20th October, 1920. Members of Central Sikh League also became members of the Congress. All began to work together to achieve their objective. Lala Lajpat Rai, the then President of the Punjab Provincial Congress was imprisoned in February, 1922. Baba Kharak Singh then took his place as President who was also arrested for delivering a seditious speech and sentenced to five years imprisonment. In December, 1922 the government banned wearing of black turbans and Gandhi caps by the prisoners. As a protest Baba Kharak Singh refused to wear anything except his underwear as long as he was in prison.

However, during this period *Nehru Committee Report* was released by the Congress and it recommended reservation of seats for Muslims in state assemblies in seven states in which they were a minority community. But no such reservation was recom-

mended for Sikhs in Punjab. Nehru Committee completely ignored the right of Sikhs as a distinct and important minority. Hence Central Sikh League rejected the report and demanded 30% reservation for Sikhs in Punjab.

An all party convention was then called in Calcutta in December, 1928. The plea of the Central Sikh League that communalism should not be made basis for any future policy in India was rejected by the President of the convention and hence the Sikhs walked out of the meeting. The Sikh confidence was lost and never fully restored. Sikhs and Congress continued to drift apart. It was only towards the close of the British period in the events leading to independence, that Sikhs and Congress were again to work in close association with each other.

In March 1940, the Muslim League for the first time, passed a resolution demanding a sovereign Muslim state. The Sikhs got greatly disturbed by this because they were for a united free India.

In 1946, the British government sent a cabinet mission to India to discuss the next step towards India's independence. The Sikh spokesman of the delegation to meet the cabinet mission was Master Tara Singh who said that he was for a united free India, but if Pakistan was to be conceded, then he was for a separate Sikh state from *Chenab* to *Jamuna*, with the right to federate either with India or Pakistan.

Although the British had accepted Sikhs beside Hindus and Muslims, to be the third party to the dispute, but the Sikh spokesman worded their demand for a Sikh state, not as something desirable by itself but simply a point in an argument against Pakistan. Hence no serious consideration was given to this demand by the Cabinet Mission and the Sikh case was lost by default.

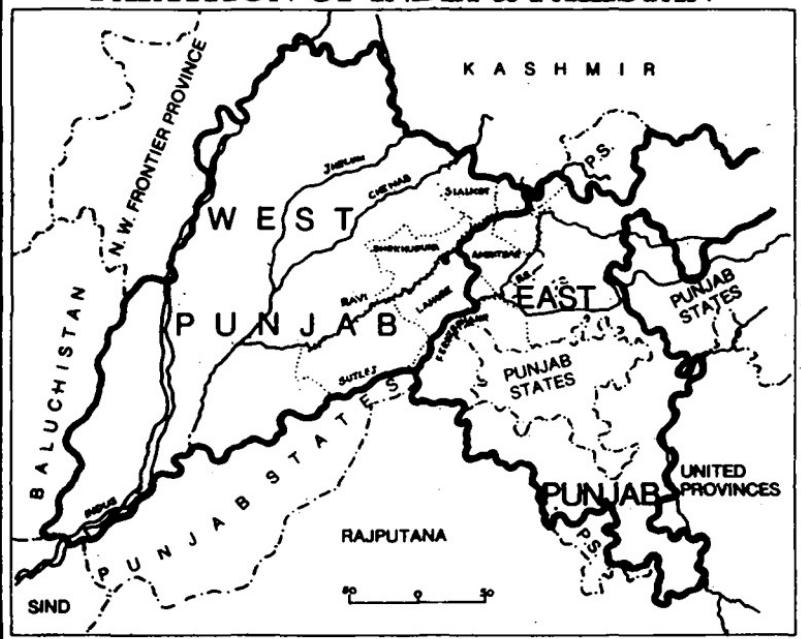
The emergence of *All India Sikh Student Federation* just before independence bears testimony to the vitality of the Sikh

youth. With the idea of "catching them young" some leaders of the Sikh community started this organisation in 1944. The main objective of the federation was to give the Sikh youth a knowledge of its rich heritage, to create a sense of pride and appreciation of the Sikh identity, and to produce future Sikh leadership. It was decided to build up the organisation from the grass roots. Apart from study circles and discussion groups of Sikh boys and girls, the federation organised training camps to inculcate the qualities of discipline, punctuality, self-reliance, leadership and appreciation of Sikh history, culture and religion. The study of *Gurbani* and the performance of *Kirtan* were encouraged.

The Federation adopted the idea of Sikh nationalism and tried to bring the intelligentia closer to the Akali Dal and to establish an independent political entity of the Sikhs.

The British left India on 14th August, 1947 with the formation of two countries. Muslim majority areas formed Pakistan and Hindu majority areas formed India. Punjab and Bengal were partitioned on the same principle. The princely states were left free to join either India or Pakistan or none. The Sikhs had cast their lot with their Hindu brethren and hence had to leave their homes in Punjab (now Pakistan) and migrate to this side of the border in Punjab (India). The Sikhs suffered most in this process as more than half of their population had to migrate and about 2,50,000 Sikhs and Hindus were killed during riots that followed. A sizable number of muslims were also killed as well in the disturbances.

## PARTITION OF INDIA & PAKISTAN



The map, issued with the Boundary Commission's report, shows the division of the Punjab between India and Pakistan.

In the freedom struggle, out of a total number of 4771 people who were either hanged, killed or transported for life by the British, 3697 were Sikhs. This means 77.5% sacrifices were made by the Sikhs for getting freedom for India from the British government as against their population ratio in India to a little less than 2%.

# 3

## SIKHS AFTER PARTITION (1947-1989)

### Partition and its Effects

The partition of the country made many Sikhs as refugees. They settled in East Punjab and quite a few in the neighbouring states of U.P. and Rajasthan. Delhi also attracted large number of Sikhs. They tried to resettle and rehabilitate themselves in the shortest possible time. Seldom was a Sikh man, woman or child seen begging in the streets. In this way, the Sikhs earned the respect of their countrymen as people of courage and fortitude. The partition had again tested and proved their mettle.

### Green Revolution

A sizeable percentage of refugees who migrated to East Punjab were farmers. The new province of East Punjab was deficit in foodgrains. Therefore the most urgent problem was how to increase the production of foodgrains to feed the growing population. The solution was provided by Green Revolution which means rapid increase in the cereal production. The enormous amount of food grains in the sixties and seventies was largely due to the hard work of the refugee farmers as well as import and use of Mexican seeds and the application of modern methods of farming. The refugee farmers, mainly Sikhs, put in their best efforts to get the maximum out of the limited area allotted to them. The Punjab Agricultural University also contributed a great deal for the success of Green Revolution.

As a result of the above efforts the yield of wheat and rice in Punjab became the highest in India. Punjab contributes around

75% of total wheat procurement and about 65% of total rice procurement by the Central Government throughout India. Even yield of cotton per hectare became the highest in India. Punjab also became one of the leading states in the production per hectare of sugarcane and potatoes. The per capita daily availability of milk is more than double the all India figure of milk production. Obviously Punjab is rightly called the "bread basket" of India.

On the industrial front, Punjab is not in a very happy state. This is because Central Government has not set up any major industries in Punjab and there is also shortage of power. The Central Government should allocate some major industries to Punjab and also set up an atomic power plant to tide over the chronic power shortage so as to put Punjab on a firm industrial base.

### Demand for Punjabi State

However, the chief cause of uneasiness of Sikhs in free India was the resurgence of Hinduism which threatened to engulf the minorities, especially the Punjabi Hindus who even disowned their mother tongue and instead declared Hindi to be their mother tongue. The system of proportional representation based on religion was also discontinued and the rule of majority came into being, thereby putting Sikhs into disadvantage.

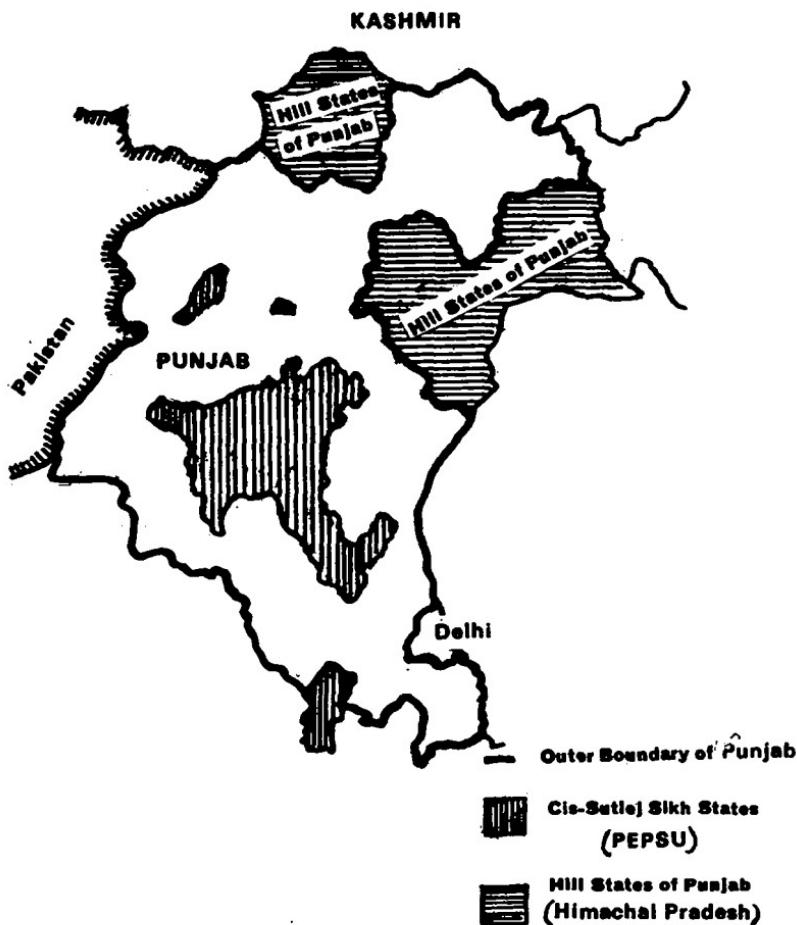
Though Sikhism is based on the concept of a classless and casteless society, in actual life a feeling of caste consciousness does exist among Sikhs. Partition and mass migration which resulted in mixing of population has not lessened this class-consciousness. This has led to social-stratification by marrying within their own social groups. This is against the basic teachings of the Sikh Gurus—that all men are equal and must be treated with equal dignity and respect. Some other Hindu customs and practices have also infiltrated into the Sikhs. For example dowry

and its exhibition continue in spite of Gurus' prohibition, similarly *Jaimala*, mixed dancing and liquor consumption are common during marriage celebrations among respectable Sikh families. The evils of smoking, drug addiction and trimming of hairs are also prevalent among some Sikhs. The propaganda of the reformists Sikh societies for the removal of these evils has not yet made any discernible impact.

The mass migration due to partition resulted in Sikhs being in majority for the first time in some districts of East Punjab. There were also some Sikh princely states in Punjab which were earlier known as cis-sutlej Sikh states. The government of India decided to absorb the princely states of Patiala, Nabha, Faridkot, Kapurthala and Jind as well as Malerkotla which were merged into one entity in May 1948 and was called Patiala and East Punjab state union-PEPSU for short.

The Sikhs formed 48% of the population of PEPSU. Even in East Punjab Sikhs were in a minority. Hence Sikhs could not have any political power either in Punjab or in PEPSU as the voting was done by and large on the basis of religion.

In 1949, Master Tara Singh, the Akali leader pressed for the formation of Punjabi-speaking state. No serious consideration was given to the demand although the congress party in a resolution before partition, had declared that after achieving independence, they will reorganise the states on linguistic basis. Hence the Sikhs under the leadership of Master Tara Singh launched in 1955 an agitation for the formation of a Punjabi speaking state at the earliest. The State government imposed a ban on the mere shouting of the slogan "Punjabi Suba Zindabad"— long live Punjabi state as the Sikh volunteers raised the slogan while courting arrest. This was most undemocratic on the part of the government. More than 12000 Sikhs courted arrest during this agitation. Ultimately government realising its mis-



Punjab as on 15th August 1947

take, withdrew the ban on the above slogan, and as such the morcha was withdrawn. Thereafter the government set up the states reorganisation commission and in 1956, it recommended the creation of linguistic states in India. However, it did not concede the demand for Punjabi speaking state. Instead it merged PEPSU with East Punjab and this resulted in reduction of Sikh population in PEPSU from 48% to 35% of the total population of

bigger Punjab formed in 1956. Moreover, it was made a bilingual state with both Hindi and Punjabi being the state languages, because Punjabi Hindus declared Hindi as their mother tongue. This was the only example of a bilingual state except Maharashtra and Gujrat which were also clubbed together to justify government's decision on Punjab. But Maharashtra and Gujrat were separated within a years time, because of stiff resistance of the people there. The Sikhs rightly felt discriminated by government in not conceding to their rightful demand for a unilingual Punjabi state.

Hence for the achievement of a unilingual Punjabi state another peaceful agitation was launched in 1956 under the leadership of Master Tara Singh as a result of which the government only conceded in demarcating Punjab into two regions-Punjabi speaking and Hindi speaking and giving some advisory powers to regional committees formed thereof.

This half hearted attempt did not satisfy the Sikhs. Again the Sikhs started an agitation under the leadership of Master Tara Singh which was later taken over by Sant Fateh Singh after his arrest. Over 57000 Sikhs courted arrest and about a dozen died during this agitation, but there was no move from the government side. So Sant Fateh Singh started a fast unto death. The government got panicky and released Master Tara Singh and invited him for talks with Pandit Nehru. However, the talks failed as Nehru refused to accede the demand for a Punjabi state. The agitation was resumed and the government passed a special Printers (Press) Act in 1961 banning the publication of any news items about Punjabi Suba or the agitation connected with it. Ultimately the agitation was withdrawn on the assurance of the government that a high-powered commission will be appointed, to go into the demands of the Sikhs. Nothing came out of it as the government was not sincere to settle the issue without any communal considerations.

Sant Fateh Singh became President of Akali Dal in 1965 and an agitation for achieving Punjabi state was intensified. However, in September 1965 war started with Pakistan and in the interest of the country, the Akali's suspended their agitation and put their full might to defend the country

Mrs. Indira Gandhi, who became Prime Minister in 1966, after the war, instituted a parliamentary committee to consider the Sikh demand. The committee decided for the formation of Punjabi state. Hence on 1st November, 1966 a unilingual state of Punjab was formed, ten years later than the formation of other unilingual states of India. However, Una, enclaves of Dalhousie, Bakloh and Kharar tehsil which included Chandigarh and which were in Punjabi region as demarcated earlier, were given to Himachal Pradesh and Haryana respectively on Communal basis as non-Sikh Punjabis were in majority in these areas. But due to threat of fast unto death by Sant Fateh Singh on this issue, Kharar tehsil was immediately restored to Punjab minus the city of Chandigarh which was made a union territory and common capital of Punjab and Haryana—the only example of this type in India. The Sikhs were not happy as the government took away Chandigarh which rightly belonged to Punjab, took control of Bhakra and Beas Dams, made common Governor, High Court, Financial Corporation, Electricity and Housing Board with Haryana.

### **Punjabi Suba Conceded**

Again Sant Fateh Singh started an agitation in December, 1966 for the inclusion of left over Punjabi-speaking areas in Punjab, restoration of Chandigarh to Punjab as its capital, the return of control of Bhakra Dam to Punjab and the abolition of the common links with Haryana. He also declared his intention of going on fast and then to immolate himself on 27th December, 1966 if his demands were not conceded by then. He, however, broke his fast on the appointed day on the assurance of the then



#### Punjab from 1st November 1966

speaker of Lok Sabha Mr. Hukam Singh, who was specially flown to Amritsar by the government in an Air Force plane, who declared that the "Chandigarh will go to Punjab". He gave this assurance facing the Akal Takht. This assurance was not implemented by the government. Sardar Darshan Singh Pheruman, a sincere and devout Sikh, took a religious vow at Akal Takht, Amritsar, that from 15th August, 1969 he would fast unto death to secure the inclusion of Chandigarh in Punjab. He accused the Akali Dal of

weakness and insincerity in not making serious efforts for obtaining Chandigarh for Punjab. As his fast posed serious problems to the United Front Ministry, Pheruman was arrested and jailed, but, subsequently, on account of his deteriorating health, he was transferred under police guard to the Government hospital, Amritsar. After 74 days of fasting, he passed away on 27th October, 1969. His body was cremated in his village. In his testament he affirmed the solemnity of the vow taken in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib. He exhorted the Sikhs to continue his mission of securing the Sikh Homeland after his death. Later on, another political group called, Pheruman Akali Dal was formed in his memory. To retrieve his status, Sant Fateh Singh again decided to start another fast in January, 1970 for achieving the above demands. Because of the surcharged situation, Mrs. Indira Gandhi after three days of his fast, announced the decision of the government by way of an award that Chandigarh will go to Punjab within 5 years time and Haryana will be given compensation of Rs. 10 crores for building a new capital which government hoped they will start constructing soon. However, the award was not implemented by the government.

#### **Emergency and Anandpur Sahib Resolution**

In 1975 emergency was declared in India. The Sikhs started an agitation by courting arrest every day against the emergency. Over 45000 Sikhs courted arrest during emergency and it continued till it was withdrawn in 1977. Indira Gandhi lost elections in 1977 and Janta government took over.

There were only two short spells of Akali ministry in Punjab in 1970 and 1977. The centre's desire to topple non-congress governments led to their fall inspite of their assembly members being in majority in Punjab and they could not retain political power. The government also interfered in the religious affairs of the Sikhs with the idea of capturing control of Shiromani Gurd-

-wara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar and Delhi Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Delhi. All the above factors being major irritants.

In 1973 the Akali Dal passed *Anandpur Sahib* resolution asking for an autonomous status for Punjab within the Indian union. This is the substance of the Anandpur Sahib resolution passed by the Akali Dal in 1973 which was reaffirmed in 1979 with minor modification. The Anandpur Sahib resolution wants that the constitution be made truly federal and it envisages the retention of only four subjects—Defence, Foreign Affairs, Communication and Currency by the centre, leaving the rest to the states.

No serious attempt was made by the government to settle the demands of Sikhs and to find a just and equitable solution without any communal considerations. The settlements arrived at, assurances given and awards announced by the government were not implemented or implemented only half heartedly by the government.

### Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwala

The Sikh demands were not given any serious consideration for so many years after partition in spite of many peaceful agitations during the course of which thousands of Sikhs courted arrest. It may be noted that all their agitations since partition were peaceful. However, a stage came when the situation gradually started deteriorating and caused the emergence of militancy among some sections of the Sikhs. This is where the Sikhs can be faulted in their otherwise peaceful struggle. But their justification is that they tried peaceful means long enough and found the govt. wanting while they have a mandate from the tenth Guru : "When all other avenues of redress are exhausted, it is just to take to arms". Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwala came on the scene at this time. It is alleged that initially he was promoted by the Congress government to break and weaken the Akalis but later he distanced himself from them.

The first violent incident was a clash between the Nirankaris and Akalis in Amritsar on 13th April, 1978 where 12 Sikhs and 3 Nirankaris were killed. The Nirankaris believe in a living Guru who is in a Sikh form. They used to install Guru Granth Sahib alongwith their living Guru at their congregations. The Sikhs objected to it and that caused the clash in 1979. This led to the murder of Baba Gurbachan Singh, Guru of Nirankaris. They have since discontinued this practice, but still make the Sikh scripture their main source of inspiration. Of late they have started misinterpreting and even computing its composition to fit in their own doctrines. Their Gurus still keep a Sikh form, but instead of Sikh baptism, they give foot wash (Charnamrit) to their followers.

It may be pointed out that the Sikh demands and grievances were magnified and distorted due to the hostile attitude of the Hindu press and media.

### **Dharam Yudh Morcha and Operation Blue Star**

In 1980, Indira Gandhi returned to power. As the Sikh demands were still not redressed, the Akalis started a *Dharam Yudh Morcha* on 4th May, 1982 for the implementation of Anandpur Sahib Resolution and other Sikh demands. Scores of Akali volunteers started courting arrest. The same year in October Asian Games were held in Delhi and because of the Akali morcha, government became extra-cautious and hence every Sikh entering Delhi was singled out and thoroughly searched and humiliated. This created a sense of alienation in the minds of the Sikhs who underwent this ordeal. The *Dharam Yudh Morcha* continued till the launching of the "Operation Blue Star" on 2nd June, 1984 by which time it is claimed by the Akalis that more than 200,000 Sikh volunteers courted peaceful arrest for the achievement of their demands. For almost two years while

the Morcha was going on, the government did not make any honest move to settle the issues involved and hence the faith of some people in peaceful protest started eroding. That is why Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwala assumed more and more importance during the currency of this morcha. The angry Sikh youth lost patience and wrested the initiative from their elders. 'You have been at it long enough,' they said, 'Let us try our hand now. And they picked up the gun. In frustration a small section of the Sikhs even started raising the demand for Khalistan, although this demand was raised a few years earlier also by some foreign based Sikhs but the Sikhs did not take much notice of the same at that time.

Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwala, who was gradually assuming more and more control, declared that nothing will be achieved by peaceful means and advocated militancy and moved into Akal Takhat. It was alleged by the government that with him, many militants had also taken shelter there alongwith arms inside the Golden Temple complex.

It was further alleged that fortifications had also been built and isolated cases of killings which had started of late were being master-minded from inside the Golden Temple complex. To flush out these militants from the Golden Temple complex, Indira Gandhi's government launched army action code named "Operation Blue Star" on 2nd June, 1984 on the eve of Guru Arjan Dev's martyrdom day, who was the builder of Golden Temple, and fifth Guru of the Sikhs. A 36 hours curfew was declared from 9 A.M. on 3rd June which was extended later. All communication systems in Punjab and Chandigarh were cut off from the outside world, not even a bullock cart moved on the roads. All newspaper reporters were ordered out, and total curfew was imposed in Punjab and Chandigarh. Army was moved in and temple complex was attacked from all sides.

Simultaneously 37 other Gurdwaras in Punjab were also attacked. Fire arms of all sorts were used including machine-guns, rockets and tanks. Helicopters of Air Force were also pressed into service including divers of the navy. After fierce and grim battle which lasted three days causing heavy casualties on both sides, the Army entered Golden Temple on 6th June, 1984.

Among the causalities, besides the alleged militants or terrorists—Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwala, Major Gen. Shahbeg Singh and AISSF President Bhai Amrik Singh,—were innocent pilgrims including women and children. As per government estimate there were 554 dead and 121 wounded and on the army side 92 dead and 300 wounded although the un-official reports contend that they were much higher on both sides. The Golden Temple for Sikhs is what Mecca is to Muslims and Vatican to Roman catholics. It bore hundreds of bullet marks while the Akal Takhat, the second most holy building in the 72 acre complex was blasted by artillery and cannon fire from battle tanks brought into the *Parikarma* and was severely damaged beyond repair.

All the surviving inmates which included women and children and numbering about 5000 were arrested including the top Akali leaders. The peaceful *Dharam Yudh Morcha* came to an automatic end and a new chapter in the history of the Sikhs opened with the launching and completion of the “Operation Blue Star”.

### Indira Gandhi's Assassination

As the Akal Thakat was severely damaged beyond repair, Indira Gandhi ordered its rebuilding and repairing of other buildings of the complex including Golden Temple before it could be handed over by the army to the SGPC. The Sikhs objected because they wanted to rebuild it themselves by ‘Kar Sewa’—voluntary labour as per their tradition. But the government went ahead with its plans of rebuilding. However, the militants, afterwards when they had again taken control of the

complex, demolished the new structure so that it could be rebuilt again by the Sikhs through voluntary labour.

The entire Sikh community was aflame with anger and a call for revenge was given by the militants for the humiliation as well as loss of pride on account of assault and grievous damage done to the shrine. Even British had dared not touch the shrine in the days of the martial law in 1919 at the time of "Jalianwala Bagh" episode, when the British authorities were bent upon teaching the Sikhs a lesson.

The Sikhs in the army were also highly agitated and around 3000 of them from different stations deserted their barracks and marched towards Amritsar. About 35 were killed on the way and the rest were arrested, tried and punished.

The Sikhs all over the world held protest meetings and demonstrations and even attacked Indian embassies and consulates abroad. As a consequence a militant organisation was founded abroad with the aim of achieving 'Khalistan'.

The Punjab newspapers and correspondents were put under strict censorship and no foreigner was allowed to visit Punjab.

In such a surcharged atmosphere created by 'Operation Blue Star', two of the trusted Sikh body guards of Indira Gandhi—Satwant Singh and Beant Singh—assassinated her on the morning of 31st October, 1984 at her official residence in New Delhi. The whole country was plunged into deep shock. Rajiv Gandhi, Indira Gandhi's son, was sworn in as Prime Minister the same evening. However, for the next five days the Sikhs were secure nowhere—whether on the roads, in their homes, shops, Gurdwaras, Railway trains, buses, cars, as a matter of fact nowhere.

It will be pertinent to add here that when Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated shortly after partition by a Maratha Hindu youth Nathu Ram Godse, no body touched a single Marathi at that time. The Sikhs fail to understand as to why, when

two Sikh guards committed the crime, the entire Sikh community was made a target of genocide in an organised manner.

According to government estimate 2733 Sikhs were killed in most heinous circumstances—tortured, burnt alive or cut into pieces. Their women folk were gang raped, their property looted or burnt. Mostly it happened in New Delhi—the capital city of India, Kanpur and Bokaro. The police became inactive and looked the other way. All the Sikh policemen in Delhi were disarmed and confined to barracks or put on office duties. The Sikhs outside Punjab were shaken to their very roots. For the first time in the history of free India they realised that they have become vulnerable. It was not the fear but the anxiety and uncertainty about their future which filled their mind and heart.

### Rajiv-Longowal Accord

General elections were held in December, 1984 and Rajiv Gandhi returned to power with thumping majority on sympathy wave. He had set Punjab as number one problem to be solved on his agenda. He ordered release of all top Akali leaders from detention for negotiations and as a result thereof on 24th July, 1985 Rajiv-Longowal accord was signed. Soon after the elections were held in Punjab and Akalis got 73 out of 117 seats in the state assembly and they formed the government under Surjeet Singh Barnala. Julio Francis Ribeiro was appointed police chief of Punjab. He started with the set task of finishing all the terrorists in Punjab which he estimated to be about one hundred. Within a month of the signing of the accord, Sant Longowal was shot dead on 20th August, 1985.

Rajiv-Longowal accord consisted of eleven clauses covering different demands of the Sikhs. Under it, Chandigarh was awarded to Punjab and was to be transferred on 26th January, 1986 alongwith transfer to Haryana some contiguous Hindi

speaking villages as per the desire of late Indira Gandhi. To determine the Hindi speaking villages on the above criteria, a Commission under Justice Mathur was set up by the government. The commission could not find any Hindi speaking villages in Punjab contiguous to Haryana. Hence another commission under Justice Venkataramiah was appointed for the same objective and he gave the verdict that 75,000 acres of adjacent land of Punjab be given to Haryana in lieu of Chandigarh though he did not identify as to which areas except for 45,000 acres of 30 Hindu majority villages (though Punjabi speaking) which Punjab offered on its own. Since this fell short of his total figure of 75,000 acres, he stipulated that 25,000 more of Punjabi speaking acres be given to Haryana without identifying any such contiguous area. To determine this area a third commission under Justice Desai was set up on 20th June, 1986 to find out specific area within 24 hours!

Justice Desai threw up his hands in despair. The Akalis were willing to part with 45,000 acres of Hindu majority (though Punjabi speaking) acres but rightly refused to give another 25000 Punjabi speaking Sikh majority acres. The government did not implement this clause of transferring Chandigarh to Punjab and hence the accord fell through without implementing any of its clauses.

A "Sarbat Khalsa" was called and a Panthic Committee of five was appointed on 26th January, 1986 by the militants as Chandigarh was not transferred to Punjab on this day as per Rajiv-Longowal accord. A resolution for the formation for "Khalistan" was also passed on this day. A year later on 26th January, 1987 another "Sarbat Khalsa" was called and a resolution for Khalistan was repeated. The resolution for Khalistan was again passed on 29th April, 1988 by the Panthic Committee. The violence had, in the meantime, escalated and the centre

therefore dismissed the elected Barnala Government on 11th May, 1987 and the State was put under President's rule under S.S. Ray as the Governor.

Surjeet Singh Barnala blamed non-implementation of the accord by centre as one of the main factors for his failure to contain violence. The people of Punjab and Sikhs in particular became sullen and suspicious as centre was setting one commission after another which gave very unreasonable and unjustified awards on acres of land to be transferred to Haryana in lieu of Chandigarh. As a matter of fact Chandigarh being a Punjabi town should have, in the very first place, given to Punjab just as Bombay was given to Maharashtra, Madras to Tamil Nadu, Shillong to Meghalaya, Simla to Himachal Pradesh and Haryana should have built its own new capital just as Gujarat built Gandhinagar, Assam built Dispur and Arunachal Pradesh built Itanagar as their state capitals.

From May 12 to 18, 1988 another police operation code named "Operation Black thunder" was launched by the government to flush out militants from the Golden Temple which the government claimed to have again been occupied by them inspite of a strict police vigil all around the complex. The golden Temple was again surrounded by the police and para military forces. This time they cut off the water, electric and food supplies thereby starving the inmates to come out. About 150 extremists were arrested this time. Shortly afterward another police operation in "*Mand*" area of Punjab was also launched with the same purpose.

During the years from 1984 to 1989 violence went on unabated in Punjab inspite of President's rule. There were daily killings on both sides. Akali leaders charged that there are many false encounters by police to kill innocent Sikhs. Forgetting that violence is no answer to violence, govt. tried their

“bullet for bullet” policy. Fake encounters became order of the day. Provoked, militants started indulging in killing sprees. More blood was shed. More innocent people lost their lives. Even police chief Julio Francis Riberio admitted that there were some police hit squads to liquidate terrorists which could have also killed some innocent Sikhs. During these five years Punjab was reeling under police atrocities and the draconian laws passed by the Rajiv Government like National Security Act and Anti Terrorists Act, thereby empowering the government to arrest anyone without warrant and keeping him under custody without trial. Even constitution was amended empowering the government to impose emergency in Punjab only and to take away right to life and property.

Out of the nearly 5000 Sikh prisoners taken at Golden Temple at the time of “Operation Blue Star”, about 400 of them were considered hardcore terrorists and were hence sent to Jodhpur jail where they remained without trial for over 4 years when around 300 were released and the remainig about 100 were transferred to various Punjab jails.

Hundreds and thousands of Sikhs were arrested on flimsy grounds and put behind bars without any trial for years together including Akali leaders like Parkash Singh Badal, Surjeet Singh Barnala, Gurcharan Singh Tohra and Simaranjit Singh Mann who was also tortured by police.

Simaranjit Singh Mann, an ex-I.P.S. officer who resigned from service as a protest against Operation Blue Star, Atinderpal Singh and two other professors of the Bombay colleges were charged with conspiracy to murder Indira Gandhi under a second charge sheet for the same offence. To file a second charge sheet for the same offence was done for the first time in the legal history of India.

### **Defeat of Rajiv Gandhi’s Congress Party**

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi called for general elections which were

held in the last week of November, 1989. The congress party lost the elections and a United Front government led by V.P. Singh took office on 2nd December 1989. On the eve of laying down his office, Rajiv Gandhi announced withdrawal of cases against some top Sikh leaders. The conspiracy to murder case as per second charge sheet was also withdrawn. Simaranjit Singh Mann was released after 5 years of detention without trial including some other Akali leaders who were also under detention for different periods of time. Simaranjit Singh Mann's Akali Dal swept the elections in Punjab by capturing 10 seats out of total 13 seats (6 by his Akali Dal, 3 independents and 1 BSP supported by his party). One Janta Dal candidate also won on their support and balance 2 seats by Congress. Mann himself won the seat by a huge margin of over 4 lakh votes over his nearest rival, the second highest in India. The election results showed that the people of Punjab have shown their anger against the repressive, unfair and unprincipled policies of the central government. Simaranjit Singh Mann emerged as the leader of Punjab and Sikhs in particular.

### **Demands of the Sikhs**

The Sikhs want to live in India peacefully as respectable and equal citizens. They only want that their just demands be accepted without any communal considerations. The main demands of the Sikhs are:—

1. Inclusion of Chandigarh in Punjab without any conditions.
2. Transfer of left-over adjoining Punjabi speaking areas of Haryana, Rajasthan, and Himachal Pradesh to Punjab.
3. Restoration of the control of Bhakra Dam to the Punjab state.
4. Implementation of Anandpur Sahib Resolution so as to

make India truly federal by giving more powers to states and centre retaining only Defence, Foreign Affairs, Currency and Communications.

5. Non-interference of government in the management of Gurdwaras.
6. Enactment of an All-India Gurdwara Bill.
7. Establishment of a powerful radio station/transmitter at the Golden Temple, Amritsar to relay Kirtan/Gurbani to be financed by the Sikh community.
8. Location of an atomic power plant in Punjab.
9. Making Amritsar an International airport. It may be noted that about 50% passengers arriving/departing at Delhi Airport are from Punjab.
10. Higher share of water of rivers-Sutlej, Beas and Ravi. Presently Punjab gets only 24% as against 76% allotted to adjoining states although Punjab is a riparian state and only surplus water should go to other states.
11. Location of major industrial projects in Punjab by the central government to generate more employment.
12. Higher allocation of central funds to Punjab.
13. To invest deposits with the banks of Punjab in the industries located in Punjab rather than investing only about one third in Punjab and rest in other states.

The Sikhs have been agitating for the achievement of the above demands for the last many years and the government is fully aware of the same. All the above demands are within the framework of Indian constitution and government, should have no hesitation in conceding them to win over the bruised psyche of the Sikhs who form a very important and inseparable segment of Indian society.



